

B Take our word for it: colloquial expressions in New Zealand

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When Kiwis (New Zealanders) talk, they may use slang words that you do not understand. Here are a few that may be used in a medical context. Be warned, however: don't try these at home; many of these words and expressions are considered vulgar, rude or offensive: do not use them until you are sure you will not offend.

anklebiter: infant, toddler, kid, small child.

arse over tit: head over heels, as "he fell arse over tit".

arse: buttocks, anus, rear end, butt.

banger: sausage, old car.

beaut: great, well, as "I've been feeling beaut".

bloke: usually a man, often referring to a stranger: "Seems a decent bloke".

bludge: to sponge off other people or the government, as "Dole bludger".

Bob's your uncle: it's all fixed, as "I put the ointment on, and Bob's your uncle".

bonk: (= bang) to have sex with.

box of birds: well, as Q: "How are you feeling now?" A: "A box of birds".

braces: suspenders.

brassed off: disappointed, annoyed.

brilliant: excellent; great; wonderful – or even OK, satisfactory, or "thanks".

bugger all: not much, very little, as Q: "Are you any better?" A: "No; bugger all".

bugger: expletive, similar to "damn"; also used for a man, often a friend; as "He's a decent bugger"; "**bastard**" is used similarly. Similar to "bloke".

buggered: exhausted.

bum: buttocks, rear end, butt. As a verb, means to bludge.

bun in the oven: pregnant.

bust a gut: make an intense effort.

cackhanded: left handed, southpaw.

cardie: cardigan; woollen button-up-the-front jersey.

carked: died, kicked the bucket. Like "croaked".

cheerio: good bye (also a small red sausage).

cheers: goodbye, thanks.

chemist: pharmacy, drug store.

chilly bin: sealable, usually polystyrene insulated box, for keeping beer and food cold. Like Australian "eskie".

chippy: builder, carpenter.

chips: french fries.

choc-a-block (chocker): full to overflowing.

choice: used when something is desirable, e.g. "That's choice!"

chook: chicken, girl.
chuffed: pleased.
chunder: vomit.
cocky: farmer, most commonly cow cocky. As adjective = over-confident.
colly wobbles: a feeling of nausea usually associated with nervousness; as “Just thinking about the operation gives me the colly wobbles”.
corker: very good.
cot: child’s bed.
cotton buds: Q tips.
crib: small holiday home, bach. As verb = copy, cheat.
crook: sick, unwell (but to “go crook” may mean to complain or tell off).
ding: a small dent in a vehicle; any hit on the body, as “Her knee took a bit of a ding early in the game”.
dodgy: bad, unreliable, spoiled, as “The fish was a bit dodgy”.
dole: unemployment benefit; income support for the unemployed.
dreaded lurgy: alternative name for the flu, a head cold, any febrile illness.
dressng gown: bathrobe.
dummy: pacifier.
dunny: toilet, bathroom, lavatory.
duvet: quilt.
eh: often used at the end of sentences whether or not expecting a response to a statement which is not a question, e.g. “I took all the pills, eh”.
face cloth: flannel: wash cloth.
fag: cigarette.
fagged out: see *knackered*.
fanny: “fanny” refers to female genitalia; fanny does not mean buttocks! a warning to Americans.
football: rugby.
french letter (frenchie, frog, joey, rubber): condom.
full on: intense.
go bush: become reclusive, “get away from it all”.
good as gold: a good job well done, not a problem, an affirmative answer, or well, as Q: “How has your sore knee been?” A: “Good as gold”.
half pai (half pie): sort of, not completely; as Q: “Are you feeling any better?” A: “Well, only half pai”.
hard yakka: hard labouring work.
heaps: a lot, as “Give it heaps”, means to push it to the limit.
home and hosed: safe, completed successfully.
hottie: hot water bottle; sexually available potential partner.
hunky dory: everything’s fine, as “My life is hunky dory now”.
jersey: sweater.
john: lavatory.
jumper: woollen sweater.
kapai: fine, excellent.
kai: food, from the Māori word for eating.
kia ora: hello, greetings.

kick the bucket: die, cark it, croak.

knackered: tired or broken; stuffed; fagged out; rooted; as “I’m knackered.”
(origin: the “knacker’s yard” is where surplus farm animals were sent to be slaughtered).

loo: bathroom, toilet.

nana: female grandparent.

nappy: diaper.

no worries: not a problem, yes, certainly; as “Thanks for your help;” A: “No worries!”

off (his) face: completely drunk.

pack a sad: become morose, ill humoured, moody, broken, e.g. “He packed a sad and went to bed.” or “The fridge packed a sad”.

pike out: to give up when the going gets tough.

piker: one who gives up easily.

piss: beer, urine. (“Take the piss” = tease).

piss around: waste time or effort in a futile manner, fart about.

pissed: drunk, inebriated.

pissed off: angry, as “I’m really pissed off!”

pissing down: raining heavily.

piss-up: social gathering with alcohol.

plaster: see *sticking plaster*.

plastered: drunk.

PMT: premenstrual tension.

pong: bad smell.

pottle: small container (e.g. for sputum – but also for strawberries in the S.Is.)

pram: baby carriage, stroller. A small dinghy.

prang: minor vehicle smash.

pushing up daisies: dead and buried.

randy: horny, feeling sexy.

right as rain: OK, perfect.

ring: phone somebody; as “I’ll give him a ring”.

root: to have sex. An American woman visitor: “My first time in NZ I said I liked to root for the football team. One of the boys said, ‘What, the *whole* team?’”.

rooted: feeling tired.

round the bend: going crazy.

she’ll be right: not a problem, it’ll be OK (may disguise some deficiencies).

shufti: a look, as “I’ll just take a shufti at that”, meaning “I’ll have a look at that”.

sickie: as “Throw a sickie”; to take time off work; also used for sickness certificate.

singlet: undershirt.

snarky: mixture of sarcastic and nasty.

snotty: condescending, snooty; or ill humoured, packing a sad.

sook: someone timid, or behaving over cautiously. As “you’re being a sook” or “just a big sook”.

spew: to throw up.

spit the dummy: to throw a tantrum or get mad.

sprog: a child.

squiz: as “Have a squiz” to take a look at something. “Giz a squiz” ask for a look at something.

sticking plaster: band aid.

stuffed: really tired.

suss: to figure out.

sweet as: really good. Q: “How would you rate the service?” A: “Sweet as.”

ta: thank you.

take aways: New Zealand term for “take outs” or food “to go”. Prêt á manger.

tata: goodbye, often when speaking to a child.

the tatas: anxiety.

tinned food: canned food.

trots: diarrhoea, as “I’ve got a dose of the trots”.

undies, underpants: undershorts, grundies.

up the duff: pregnant, in the family way, with a bun in the oven, sprogged, etc.

whinge: complain, grizzle.

wicked: energetic, well; as “I feel wicked after a week off work”.

wobbly (pack a wobbly): become angry, get snotty.

yonks: forever, a long time, ages; as “I haven’t been right for yonks”.

zambuck: St John Ambulance officer.

zit: acne lesion.

References

This material was gleaned from several general websites on New Zealand colloquial words.

1. www2.vuw.ac.nz/international/studentlife/glossary_nz.html.
 2. www.chemistry.co.nz/kiwi.htm#quite_nice.
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