Finn
Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English with me, Finn.

Neil
And me, Neil.

Finn
Neil, I'm going to tell you a joke.

Neil
OK, come on.

Finn
Which part of learning the English language are boxers best at?

Neil
Which part of English are boxers best at? I don't know.

Finn
Punch-uation (punctuation).

Neil
That's actually quite funny.

Finn
Do you really think so?

Neil
I do, yes.

Finn
Well, I'm glad I made you laugh. But you might not thank me for it after the programme.

Neil
Why's that?

Finn
Because a paper published by the British Medical Journal says that laughter is not always the best medicine, and sometimes, it can actually be harmful.

Neil
Well, in that case I definitely won't be laughing at your jokes any more! And, to be honest, it wasn't funny anyway.
Finn
Anyway, today we'll be exploring the connection between laughter and health, and looking at some health-related vocabulary. But before we get into the story, Neil: a question.
You're a parent. At what age do babies begin to laugh? Is it:

a) 0-3 months
b) 3-6 months
c) 6-8 months

Neil
Right I'm pretty sure, unless my memory is very bad, that it's a) 0-3 months.

Finn
OK, well, we will find out if you're right at the end of the programme. OK, so laughter, as I said, is generally thought of as a good thing. There's a phrase I said earlier which is: laughter is the best medicine.

Neil
Yes, and talking of medicine, there are many medical studies which examine the benefits of laughter – it reduces stress, it's good for your heart, things like that. But now you're telling me it can have some negative effects?

Finn
Well, why don't we listen to Professor Robin Ferner, who is one of the authors of the research paper. How many negative effects of laughter does he mention?

Robin Ferner, University of Birmingham
We found people with heart rhythm disturbance which had stopped their heart, we found people who had fainted, we found people whose gullets had burst, we found people who'd dislocated their jaws or burst their lungs.

Neil
Quite a few! It seems laughing can be no laughing matter!

Finn
Indeed – he mentions five problems caused by laughter, including heart rhythm disturbance, fainting, burst gullets, dislocated jaws and even burst lungs.

Neil
Some of those sound quite nasty. Fainting is when you lose consciousness and pass out; and your gullet is the tube through which food passes from the mouth to the stomach, so a burst gullet would be horrible.

Finn
I think it would be very bad! We also heard about burst lungs – lungs are the organs in your chest that you use to breathe. And – I think you'd have to be laughing very hard to do
this – to get a **dislocated jaw**. To dislocate something is to move it out of its normal place or position, so you dis-locate it. A dislocated jaw – ouch.

**Neil**
Well, thankfully there is no danger of dislocated jaws with your jokes Finn!

**Finn**
OK! Well, in fact, these five dangers are only some that were mentioned in the study.

**Neil**
But surely, there must have been some positive findings?

**Finn**
Yes, let's listen to Professor Robin Ferner again – which health benefit does he mention?

**Robin Ferner, University of Birmingham**
You actually use energy when you laugh, you move your diaphragm, you expand your lungs, and both those things can be helpful. For example, it’s said that laughing for quarter of an hour will burn up 40 kcal, and if you laughed all day you’d use up about 2,000 calories.

**Finn**
That's more like it! Laughing can help you lose weight, because you use energy when you laugh.

**Neil**
In fact, quite a lot of energy: if you laughed all day you’d use 2,000 calories, which is what most people consume in a day.

**Finn**
He also thinks laughing makes people feel better, and it can reduce the chance of having a **heart attack**.

**Neil**
So overall – what's the story – laughing: good or bad?

**Finn**
Well, he says for most people, most of the time, laughing is a great thing. And well, that's good, because I like to laugh, don’t you Neil?

**Neil**
Oh yes I do.

**Finn**
Earlier I asked you Neil, at what age do babies begin to laugh? Was it 0-3 months, 3-6 months or 6-8 months?

**Neil**
And I said 0-3 months.
Finn
Well, Neil, the answer was in fact b) 3-6 months. A little bit later! And 0-3 months, which was your answer, Neil, is when babies smile for the first time.

Neil
Well, you had the last laugh there Finn.

Finn
Very good – and if you have the last laugh it means you're successful in the end. Right, that's it for this programme. Do log on to bbclearingenglish.com for more 6 Minute English. Goodbye!

Neil
Bye.

Vocabulary

laughter is the best medicine
a phrase which means that laughing is a good way to be happy and stop worrying

no laughing matter
something very serious that you should not make jokes about

fainting
losing consciousness for a short time, usually falling to the ground

gullet
the tube through which food passes from the mouth to the stomach

lungs
the organs in your chest which you use to breathe

dislocated
(of a bone) moved suddenly out of its correct position

jaw
the lower part of your face (your chin and lower teeth)

heart attack
a serious medical problem when the heart stops working properly and causes chest pain

to have the last laugh
to finally be successful, often after an argument or disagreement