



# HELLO OKAYA

OKAYA INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ASSOCIATION  
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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Exchange Association, with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insight into aspects of Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback or any questions you may have.

## Pension

Pension is a regular and continuous annual payment and the scheme that guarantees it is called the pension system. The pension system is an essential support for the basic needs of people in their old age, so starting 1961, insurance fees were collected from all citizens based on the National Pension Act, establishing the universal pension system. Then in 1985, the pension system was amended and has become the Basic Pension System which we still have up to now. Due to the changing industrial structures, urbanization and the trend toward nuclear families in Japan, the family that traditionally supports the parents in their old age is now facing a dilemma. Now, it has become imperative for society to support the elderly, with the public pension system being the social scheme to provide security and independence to people in their post-retirement lives.

The Japanese pension is a three-tier system. As a general rule, people between 20 to 60 years of age and living in Japan are required to enroll under the national pension (called the old age basic pension when claimed). A person who turns 65 years of age can claim this basic pension (the first tier part of pension system) if he/she has paid the insurance premium for 25 years or more. As obligated by law, private and government employees are considered automatically enrolled by their companies/organization in the welfare pension program and mutual aid pension program.

It is for this reason that on top of the first tier basic pension, elderly people can still claim the second tier pension which is the welfare pension and the retirement mutual pension.

There are also private pension insurance that are entirely optional (regardless of employer) which you can claim after retirement. Individuals can voluntarily enroll in the national pension fund and defined contribution pension and companies can enroll their employees in corporate pension plans.

In case of disability, you can claim for disability pension, or in case of death, the surviving family can claim for bereaved family pension. Depending on the management method of the pension, it can be classified into public and private pension. Moreover, the pension referred to as individual pension is oftentimes differentiated from private pension.

Lastly, foreigners who have enrolled in Japanese public pension scheme for six months or longer can apply for the lump-sum withdrawal payments. There are certain conditions that needs to be fulfilled in order to be entitled for this payment, such as not possessing Japanese citizenship, not having a place of residence in Japan, etc. Once the lump-sum withdrawal payment has been claimed, the period of enrollment in the welfare annuity insurance and national pension corresponding to the paid amount is nullified. You also need to file the claim within two years after you leave Japan. For details, visit the Japan Pension Service homepage.



## ★Japanese Traditions ~One point Japanese culture~

### Bonsai (Potted dwarf tree)

Bonsai are miniaturized potted plants and trees for aesthetic appreciation and are an art form unique to Japan. The pine tree is cited as typical, but all sorts of other plants and trees are nurtured.

When the roots have grown too long, the plant is taken out of the pot, cut, planted in fresh dirt, the branches are diligently pruned, and wire is sometimes wrapped around the trunk and branches to shape them to the desired configuration.

To keep this up as the trees and plants grow, they are handed down across several generations. To complete the



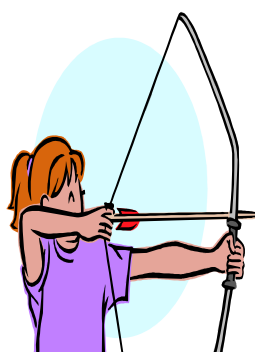
ideal shape requires a considerable amount of knowledge and labor, even for an expert, but it has an intimate appeal as a hobby. In Japan, it is chiefly taken up as a hobby by those in middle and old age, while in the United States it is also popular among young people.

### Kyudo (Japanese archery)

Bows and arrows were once used as weapons in Japan.

However, from the end of the Muromachi Period (1333-1573), warriors

valued kyudo as a discipline for mind and body and thus advanced its development as a martial art. However, kyudo values manners and formality rather than victory or defeat and pursues the detachment of mind. The archer's bow is made of laminated wood and bamboo and it is just over two meters long. It is operated by wearing an archer's glove on the right hand and using bamboo arrows. Generally, the distance to the target is 28 meters in a short-distance shooting and 60 meters in a long-distance shooting.



### Sake (Rice wine)



Brewed with rice and water, this has been a Japanese alcoholic beverage since ancient times. Because it can be drunk warmed up, intoxication comes on more quickly and in winter it warms the body. When

drunk cold, good sake has a taste similar to fine quality wine. As a result, there are some kinds of sake that have won prizes when submitted for exhibition at European wine competitions. Some kinds of sake are mass-produced and sold throughout Japan. However, there are local sake breweries in every region across the country, which make their respective characteristic tastes based on the quality of rice and water and differences in brewing processes. This is called "jizake" (locally brewed sake) and has played the main role in the recent sake boom. With the alcohol concentration at around 15%, it is comparatively easy to drink, resulting in increasing number of female fans.



# Okaya City Hall Department Guide

Okaya City Hall, 8-1 Saiwai-cho, Okaya City 394-8510 Tel. 0266-23-4811

Open from 8:30 AM to 5:15 PM

Closed every Saturday, Sunday, Holidays, Year-end and New Year (Dec. 29 to Jan. 3)



**1F**

## ★ Civic Life Division

The Civic Life Division (Shimin Seikatsu-ka) provides the following services: receiving of notifications and issuance of certificates for resident registration, family registry (koseki), foreign resident registration, seal registration, etc., national pension, crime prevention, traffic safety measures, consumer affairs, dog registration, Uchiyama Cemetery administration and other safety and sanitation-related services.

- Issuance of residence certificate and family registry
- Filing notifications for family registry
- Reporting change of address
- Seal registration and issuance of seal registration certificate
- Foreign resident registration
- Issuance of foreign resident registration certificate
- Issuance of crematorium permit
- National Pension related matters
- Inquiries about public restrooms
- Applying for a permit to operate graveyards and crematoriums
- Uchiyama Cemetery-related matters
- Dog registration (death, changes in registration, etc.)
- Rabies vaccination
- Inquiries about abandoned bicycles around the station

## ★ Health Promotion Division

★ Health Center (Separate building on the west side of the City Hall) ••• Medical Checkup and vaccination

The Health Promotion Division is in charge of vaccination, insurance guidance, and matters related to the national health insurance system.

- General vaccination
- Health Checkup
- Blood donation
- Nutrition-related affairs
- Dental services
- Mental Health
- Vaccination
- Health Checkup follow-up
- Maternal and child health
- Health checkup for babies
- Health consultation services
- National Insurance Medical Services
- Public Welfare Medical Services
- Healthcare programs for the elderly

## ★ Local Tax Division

★ Hachijuni Bank (City Hall Branch) (Next to the Local Tax Division)

The Local Tax Division is responsible for collecting municipal taxes and issuance of income certificates, tax returns and other tax-related transactions.

- City/Prefectural Tax
- Real estate tax, city planning tax
- Tax for light vehicles (kei-cars)
- National Health Insurance tax
- Taxpayer assistance
- Hometown Tax (Donation)

**2F**

## ★ Social Welfare Division

The Social Welfare Division is tasked to implement local welfare activities and encourage lifelong learning activities for the elderly. It is also in charge of the affairs about life, wellness and welfare for the handicapped.

- Local welfare activities
- Assistance to disaster victims
- Human rights advocacy
- Lifelong learning activities for the elderly
- Welfare for handicapped people
- Livelihood support
- Consultation services for single mothers
- Welfare activities and assistance to families headed by a single parent
- Assistance to war-displaced Japanese orphans (left behind in China)

## ★ Health Care Welfare Division

The Health Care Welfare Division handles public nursing care insurance and illness prevention.

- Nursing care insurance application processing and inspection visits
- Illness prevention
- Local comprehensive assistance center

## ★ Child Affairs Division

★ Child Support Center "Kodomo no Kuni" (4F Iif Plaza)

The Child Affairs Division aims to promote a peaceful community conducive to raising children by engaging in activities that supports preschool education and children development.

- Child counseling (home visit)
- Preschools
- Kindergartens
- Language lessons
- Preschool Training facility "Mayumi-en"
- Child allowance
- "Kodomo no Kuni" child-rearing support facility

## ★ Educational Affairs Division

The Educational Affairs Division handles elementary and junior high school enrollment procedures, education consultation services, application for school expense subsidies and matters related to public community center activities.

- Enrollment procedures for elementary and junior high schools
- Elementary/Junior High School Student Transfer procedures
- Education consultation services
- Application for school expense subsidies
- "Friendly" classroom
- Public community hall activities



**3F****★ City Planning Division**

The City Planning Division is responsible for the general urban planning, city road layouts and upgrading and improving public infrastructures. This division is in charge of managing the public housing facilities and building construction inspections.

- Urban planning (zoning etc.)
- Legal processes and procedures based on city planning laws
- Road/Street layouts
- Land readjustment
- Management of public city housing
- Leasing of the public housing facilities
- Maintenance of public housing
- Construction inspections, building guidance, design and supervision.

**4F****★ Waterworks Division**

The Waterworks Division is in charge of the general planning and regulation of the water and sewerage system, water bills, sewage fees, various applications, water supply, water utility, maintenance of hot springs, design, maintenance and improvement of public sewerage system.

- Comprehensive planning, assessment, and permit applications
- Water bills, sewerage fees
- Applications for water utility
- Water meter inspection
- Water network layout and maintenance, evaluation and inspection of water supply equipment installation
- Layout and maintenance of public sewerage system

**★ Commerce & Tourism Division**

The Commerce and Tourism Division is responsible for advancing small retail businesses and promoting tourism. It is also in charge of town development cultural activities, management of parks and urban greening activities, Okaya Taiko festival, Tsurumine Park Tsutsuji Festival and introducing Okaya's appeal to many people to attract more visitors.

- Silky Bus, Swan Bus, and other transportation and communication
- Plaza in front of the station, bicycle parking facility next to the station, amusement facilities, Chuo-cho parking lot, Iif Plaza, Lala Okaya administration and operation
- Silk Industry-related matters
- Okaya Taiko Festival and Tsutsuji Festival at Tsurumine Park
- Planning and implementing various tourism events
- Promotion of Okaya City souvenirs
- Maintenance and preservation of Toriidaira Yamabiko Park, Okaya Kohan Park and other parks in the city
- Fight Okaya Festival
- Cultural Hall (Canora Hall) operations
- Japan Doga Museum (Iif Dogakan) operations

**★ Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries Division**

The Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries Division deals with the promotion and infrastructure development of the farming, timber and fishing industries, as well as other activities regulating agricultural areas.



- Consultation services regarding agriculture
- Directory of leasable private farms
- Directory of farmers market
- Mountain and forest preservation

**★ Okaya International Exchange Association (OIEA)**

OIEA undertakes different kinds of activities like publishing a quarterly newsletter in different languages, offering free Japanese language lessons to foreign residents and organizing local international exchange events. OIEA also offers translation services (for public documents like birth certificates, marriage contracts and related documents), interpretation services and multilingual administrative consultation for foreigners.

**★ Interpretation** – To facilitate smooth city hall transactions for foreign residents, an OIEA staff or a volunteer may act as an interpreter. (This may depend on the availability of the OIEA staff. Please understand that interpretation in a foreign language other than English may or may not be available.)

**★ Consultation services in foreign languages** – Offers general consultation for foreign residents living in Okaya City concerning daily life issues and problems. If the staff of OIEA is not capable of responding to one's inquiry, OIEA can introduce someone who can help.

**【Consultation services in English】 (Monday to Friday 8:30 AM to 5:15 PM)**

**【Consultation services in Portuguese】 (Wednesdays 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM)**

**【Consultation services in Chinese】 (Tuesdays 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM / Thursdays 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM)**

\* Although other languages are not available, we might still be able to introduce you to someone who can assist you if you can bring someone who speaks Japanese.

# Health Tips

## How to take your medicine

Generally, people take medicine with lukewarm water 30 minutes after meal. The reason for this is that lukewarm water speeds up absorption by dissolving the medicine.

The following are the different times you can take medicine.



### ● Taking medicine approximately 30 minutes before meals

Medicine is absorbed faster when taken on an empty stomach which results to faster efficacy. (There are certain exceptions.) However, it can easily cause stomach irritation. There are a number of medicine that you should take before meals as they are absorbed slowly (like herbal medicine) and does not cause stomach irritation. Some examples are blood sugar level-lowering drugs for diabetes (because glucose levels spike up after meals ), medicine for the stomach (that protects the gastrointestinal lining and neutralizes gastric acid)

### ● Taking medicine immediately before meals

Medicine that promotes adsorption of anti-diabetic drugs and fats



### ● Taking medicine immediately after meals

After-meal time is when the stomach is full and drug efficacy is delayed because of slower absorption. (There are certain exceptions.) However, stomach irritation is inhibited. It is for this reason that drugs that can cause upset stomachs are usually taken after meals. If drugs that are prescribed to be taken 30 minutes after a meal still cause stomach irritation, then it is best to take it immediately after eating.

### ● Taking medicine approximately (within or) 30 minutes after meals

A lot of medicine are prescribed to be taken within 30 minutes after meal. This is when the stomach is at its fullest and irritation least likely to occur. If you will most likely forget to take your medicine 30 minutes after meal, it is recommended that you take it soon after eating. If a drug is prescribed to be taken three times a day, you still need to take your medicine during meal time even if you are actually skipping meals. It is important to take your medications at regular time intervals within the day.

### ● Taking medicine in-between meals. (Approximately 2 hours after meals.)

This means taking medication not during meals, but in-between. Stomach is empty during this time, similar to when you are taking medicine before meals. Herbal medicine, medicine for gastric ulcers and kidney diseases and other toxic adsorbent drugs are prescribed to be taken in-between meals.

### ● Taking medicine 30 minutes before going to bed

Medicines taken before bed time is irrelevant to the condition of the stomach. Laxative and sleeping pills are common examples of these. Gastric juice-inhibiting drugs (acid forms in the stomach during sleep) and asthma-attack preventive drugs are also usually taken before sleeping.

Although many people worry about taking medicine because of certain side effects it may cause, in reality, it has been verified based on many medical cases that the odds of experiencing such side effects are very low.



When treated for a week, allergies rarely show up after a month after taking medication. Even medicine that can cause an upset stomach is limited. An example is the analgesic drug or the common pain killers. It is recommended that you take it 30 minutes after meal. The penicillin antibiotic can be poorly absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract, so it also advised to take it 30 minutes after eating something. However, most antibiotics can be absorbed by the body fully well if taken with an empty stomach before breakfast as the medicine gets into the bloodstream faster. It is very important to take the prescribed daily dose of antibiotic in order for the medicine to be effective. Antihypertensive medications (blood pressure-lowering drugs) and angina therapeutic products are absorbed well by the body but the drawback is that these drugs are devised to only work for a short while and is generally prescribed to be taken once daily. It is for this reason that blood pressure regulating medications and angina therapeutic products should be taken at a fixed time of the day, regardless of meals.

Aside from these, some people worry about constipation as side effects of certain drugs. Some gastrointestinal medications can drastically increase the rate of digestion, resulting to constipated bowel movement. If this is the case, consult with your family physician to reevaluate your gastrointestinal medication.

It is important to remember that more than worrying about taking medicine, one should take heart not to forget taking it on time.

(Medical Association)