



HELLO OKAYA

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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Center, 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.

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Lifestyle Diseases



Cancer, heart disease, and strokes are illnesses everyone is aware of. They account for more than 60% of total yearly deaths amongst the Japanese. As the risk of developing these illnesses increases with adulthood, they were called adult diseases, and these ones especially were known as the big three. Recently however, with various changes in diet and lifestyle, even children are developing adult diseases such as diabetes. As adult diseases are no longer related to age, they have come to be known as lifestyle diseases. Such illnesses are closely linked to our daily lives (diet, exercise, rest, smoking, drinking etc...) and the new name lifestyle diseases implies that we must take care not to develop such illnesses by reevaluating our daily lives. The scariest thing about lifestyle diseases is that they advance without noticeable symptoms, and it is not uncommon for several illnesses to breakout at the same time. With lifestyle diseases, by far the most important thing is quick diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, regular medical checkups are essential. Why not take this as an opportunity to once more reexamine the way you lead your daily life?



Japanese Traditions ~One point Japanese culture~



Calligraphy (*Shodo*)

This is the art of drawing characters with a brush and India ink to express spiritual depth and beauty. *Shodo* originally came from China, but in Japan Chinese characters were combined with the Japanese syllabary, devised in Japan, to create this unique character art. With a brush soaked in India ink, you can freely control, unlike with a pen, the thickness and the shading of the characters. That is how calligraphers are able to express their spirits and ideas.



Bonenkai

To most Japanese, December, though it is the busiest month, is the time they enjoy *bonenkai*, which literally means a party for forgetting the year. Various social groups or sections of companies and offices, as well as families, have their own *bonenkai*. Some of them have *shinnenkai* (New Year party) instead of year-end parties, but it is far less common. With all formality laid aside, *bonenkai* is a good opportunity for participants to interact and strengthen ties.



The Causes of Lifestyle Diseases

The main cause of lifestyle diseases is lifestyle, not genetic makeup. If you can improve your lifestyle, the chance of developing these diseases will decrease. Let's take a look at the factors that increase the risk of developing such diseases.

Keeping Irregular Hours

For most, we lead job focused lives, and for this reason our sleep patterns and meal times become irregular. We sometimes skip breakfast, eat dinner at different times due to overtime, drink alcohol until late when socializing outside of work with clients and co-workers and so forth. Our routines fall into disarray. If we keep irregular hours over a long period of time, we become more susceptible to



Genetic Makeup

Genetic makeup can also be included as one of the causes of lifestyle diseases. People with a family history of such problems as diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer, may be predisposed to similar lifestyle diseases. That being said, it is important to reevaluate your daily lifestyle to prevent developing such illnesses.

Physical Ageing

As we get older our bodies become weaker and this is a cause of lifestyle diseases. Take blood vessels for example. As they weaken with age, arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) occurs. In addition to causing angina and heart attacks, arteriosclerosis also leads to strokes. With age our immune system also weakens and our body's ability to fight cancer cells decreases, putting us at higher risk of developing cancer.

Overwork and Stress

It is becoming evident that stress causes both blood pressure and blood sugar levels to rise. If stress builds up, we run an increased risk of developing stomach and duodenal ulcers. Should this happen, our immune system weakens, and we become more susceptible to cancer and infectious diseases.

In order to prevent developing lifestyle diseases, it is important to relieve stress and avoid becoming fatigued.



Drinking and Smoking

Alcohol and cigarettes are a cause of lifestyle diseases.

Although drinking in moderation has a relaxing effect and relieves stress, drinking in excess can cause lifestyle diseases such as cancer in the digestive system, diabetes, hyperlipidaemia, high blood pressure, and gout.

Smoking is a catalyst in the development of cancer and arteriosclerosis, and is said to be the main cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) which is becoming increasingly more common these days.



Westernization of the Japanese Diet

Compared to before the Japanese diet has become westernized. In place of Japanese foods, the consumption of meats, eggs, butter, other dairy products, and animal fats has increased heavily. Consequently the number of obese people has risen, and this has ultimately led to an increase in lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and hyperlipidaemia. So it is fair to say that changes in diet are linked to lifestyle diseases.

Lack of Exercise

In contrast to previous years, developments have been made in transportation and other areas, making our lives more convenient than ever. As a result people of today have a reduced opportunity to get exercise, and this leads to obesity, which in turn causes changes in blood pressure, blood sugar levels, cholesterol levels, and neutral fat levels, and these are the causes of lifestyle diseases. Lack of exercise makes it easy for stress to build up, and this can be a dangerous factor in the development of cancer.



Variations of Lifestyle Diseases

Diabetes - An illness where sugar is released in the urine due to an increase in blood sugar levels. A high calorie diet and lack of exercise are cited as the causes of diabetes.

Hyperlipidaemia - This is when excessive fat (cholesterol and neutral fat) is contained in the blood. Genetic makeup, diabetes, and a high fat intake are among the causes.

High blood pressure - As the name suggests this is when the pressure of the blood rises to a high level. It can be caused by such things as genetic makeup, diet, obesity, hormone abnormalities, kidney trouble, and other such problems.

Obesity - Having a high level of body fat and being above average weight. When your calorie intake exceeds your calorie expenditure, obesity can occur. There is a slight possibility that hormone and brain abnormalities can also cause obesity.

Cancer - Both genetic makeup and an unbalanced lifestyle can be causes of cancer

Strokes - There are different types of strokes. With cerebral and subarachnoid hemorrhages, blood vessels in the brain rupture and bleeding occurs. With a cerebral infarction, blood vessels in the brain get blocked. Among the main causes of strokes are high blood pressure, hyperlipidaemia, diabetes, hardening of the arteries, arrhythmia (irregular pulse).

Arteriosclerosis - This is when cholesterol and other fats build up on the walls of the arteries causing the walls to thicken and harden. Blood flow is affected and this can trigger various problems with the heart and brain. Among the main causes of hardening of the arteries are smoking, lack of exercise, obesity, high blood pressure, hyperlipidaemia, and stress.

Hello



I'm Matt, the new CIR



Hello everyone. My name is Matthew Taylor and I am the new Okaya city Coordinator for International Relations. I'm from the U.K. which is where the Olympics were held earlier this year. London was the focal point of the Olympics, but my hometown Banbury, which like Okaya is surrounded by nature, is located 100 kilometers north of London.

I first came to Japan in 2002 for one year to study Japanese as an exchange student at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Then in 2007 I returned to Japan, and since then have been living in Okaya. So what sparked my interest in Japan? Well, when I was young my family acted as a home stay family and welcomed various people from all over the world. As I had more opportunity to interact with people from overseas, my interest in foreign countries and cultures grew. By chance a large number of the home stay students we welcomed were Japanese, and consequently I became particularly interested in Japan. My dream at that time was to learn Japanese and visit Japan. To be able to say that I have achieved that dream makes me very happy.

Thanks to the invaluable experience mentioned above, I have come to realize the importance of intercultural understanding, and to learn how fun interacting with people of different nationalities can be. As both a member of today's global society and as CIR, I want to convey this message to everyone. I also hope to get people more interested in international exchange activities through exciting events.

I am sure I will have chance to meet many of you and I am really looking forward to this. Please say 'hi' if you happen to see me around. I plan to do my best as Coordinator for International Relations, so *yoroshiku onegaisimasu*.