



JAPAN INFORMATION
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在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

TEACHING TUESDAY

COMING OF AGE DAY

In America, 18 generally represents the age of adulthood, and is celebrated on individual birthdays. But in Japan, there is Coming of Age Day (成人の日 Seijin no Hi), a public holiday that occurs on the second Monday of January. This day honors everyone who has turned 20 in the last year, the age at which people are officially considered to be “adults” in Japan. Usually, anyone whose birthday falls between April 2 of the previous year and April 1 of the current year attends.

The history of Coming of Age Day dates back as far as the 700s in the Nara Period, when princes would put on new robes and change their hair to denote their reaching adulthood. In the Edo period, boys began to cut their hair and wear swords on their 15th birthday, while girls would dye their teeth black on their 13th birthday, both actions signaling adulthood. When the official age was officially set at 20 in 1876, Coming of Age ceremonies began to pick up steam and became a national holiday in 1948.

Coming of Age day is marked by seijin shiki (成人式), ceremonies held at government offices recognizing the new adults and their new responsibilities. Women often wear glamorous, expensive furisode and zori, while men will wear montsuki haori hakama or suits. The celebration continues after the seijin shiki, with many of the new adults going out with friends, or participating in the many events, including street festivals, which occur on this day.