



Shichi-go-san (7-5-3)



Shichi-go-san (standing for the ages of seven, five and three) is a traditional Japanese ceremony celebrating the growth of children and wishing for their continued good health.

Girls celebrate when they are three and seven years old, and boys three and five years old.

In medieval time, death rate of infants was very high. Therefore, children did not keep their hair long till they turned three as it was believed that

long hair brought in illness, and small children were not strong enough to fight with it.

From three years old they started growing hair long. This is the origin of three years old celebration. Originally, it was a custom only for families of samurais and aristocrats, but in the Edo period (1603-1868) ordinary families followed them.

Children dress up in traditional kimono and visit a shrine with parents and sometimes grandparents. At the shrine, the chief priest prays for each child's healthy growth.

Shichi-go-san is one of the few chances when you can see Japanese people wearing kimono.

Besides the shrine prayer visit, taking a commemorative photo and hosting a dinner party with family are common ways to celebrate.

Chitose Ame Candy

When visiting the shrine for *Shichi-go-san*, the children may receive a slender red and white stick-shaped candy called *chitose ame*.

"*Chitose*" literally means one-thousand years, and this traditional candy signifies a long life for the child.



Chitose ame candy comes in a paper bag with cranes, turtles, pine, bamboos and plums—all items traditionally known to bring good fortune.

All children look forward to receiving *chitose ame* very much.

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