

# Extending Healthy Life Spans and Reducing Medical Expenses

## Saitama Prefecture



### Background and Purpose of Project

Medical expenditures for residents of Saitama Prefecture amounted to 1.6 trillion yen in fiscal 2008, roughly equivalent to the prefecture's annual general-account budget. The spending is expected to be 45% larger than the budget in fiscal 2017.

Of national medical expenditures totalling 39 trillion yen annually, one-third is related to diseases associated with adult lifestyle habits.

If a system is fully implemented in which the government assists the efforts of citizens to rectify their lifestyle habits, medical expenditures will be reduced and the savings can be diverted to other areas.

### Outline of Project

In line with this belief, the prefectural government designated seven cities in the prefecture as model cities and carried out model projects focused on physical exercise, diet and uniform meals for a whole housing complex in fiscal 2012-2014. The effects of the projects were examined from a scientific viewpoint.

Based on the results of the model projects and presentations at academic conferences, the prefectural government created the "Saitama Model for Health and Longevity" in fiscal 2014.

It aims to encourage municipalities in the prefecture to adopt the model as part of efforts to extend the healthy life spans of residents and reduce medical expenditures.

### ◆Promotion of the Saitama Model for Health and Longevity in the whole of the prefecture.

The Saitama Model for Health and Longevity consists of the following three parts:

#### 1. Recommended programmes with verified effects for reducing medical expenditures

The recommended programmes are programmes whose effects in improving physical data and reducing medical expenditures have been verified, mainly by presentations at academic conferences. There are two such programmes: the "daily 10,000-step exercise," which promotes walking 10,000 steps every day for six months or longer; and "training to increase muscle strength," a nine-month programme that combines muscle training to strengthen abdominal and back muscles with aerobic workouts such as stationary bike exercise and walking. The programmes were tailored to the municipalities taking part in the project and recommended together with balanced diets.



Participants in a "daily 10,000-step exercise"

#### 2. "Winning formulas" summing up secrets for producing intended results

The "winning formulas" show specific ways of

producing the intended results for the recommended programs. These include efforts to call on residents who receive regular municipal medical checkups to participate in the programmes and to ask businesses to encourage the participation of employees, in order to ensure that the programmes are joined by as many residents as possible, including people with health risks.

Another formula is an arrangement that maintains the motivation of programme participants and encourages them to continue exercise by allowing them to see the effects of exercise in data and by giving them opportunities to compete against each other. A third calls for region-wide initiatives that make use of the opinions of academic experts in each region and assistance from so-called healthy lifespan supporters.

### 3. Finely tuned assistance to municipalities and priority distribution of national health insurance subsidies

In fiscal 2015, a total of 20 municipalities worked on the Saitama Model for Health and Longevity and introduced health promotion projects that suit the characteristics of respective regions, such as collaborations with private-sector companies and dietary education with the use of local specialty vegetables. Collaborative projects with private-sector businesses include the "Tanita Life for Whole Housing Complex," under which recommended menus are prepared and uniform meals provided accordingly for an entire housing complex. The project was carried out in collaboration with health appliance maker Tanita Corp., which has a track record of creating programmes for healthy dietary living.

#### **◆Support for the wider use of the Saitama Model for Health and Longevity**

The prefectural government actively implements health promotion activities and nurtures what it calls "healthy lifespan supporters," who have acquired knowledge about health promotion and are

tasked with giving family members, friends and other people around them information about good health, in a bid to raise residents' health consciousness and induce changes in behaviour. (Such supporters totalled 39,236 as of the end of August 2015.)

To be certified as healthy lifespan supporters, applicants need to complete training courses offered at health promotion events organised by the prefectural and other municipal governments. In these training courses, the participants acquire basic knowledge about improved dietary living and the health effects of exercise before taking certificate exams. Those who pass the exams are issued with a healthy lifespan supporter assistance booklet that offers suggestions for carrying out healthy promotion activities.

### **Features and Advanced Aspects**

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### **Effects of Project**

Major results of the projects (results of model projects implemented from fiscal 2012)

#### **◆A daily 10,000-step exercise project in the City of Higashimatsuyama**

Walking every day, aiming for 10,000 steps  
On September 20, 2014, Tomoo Ryushi, professor

of Daito Bunka University, made a presentation at an annual meeting of the Japan Society of Physical Fitness and Sports Medicine.

(A total of 117 people took part in the project in fiscal 2013.)

-HDL cholesterol level: improvement of 7.2 mg/dl -Neutral fat: improvement of 33.1 mg/dl -Quick-pace walking speed: rise of 9.2 meters/min -Medical expenditures: reduction of 23,846 yen / year (in terms of difference between project participants and a group selected for comparison)
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#### ◆A training project to increase muscle strength in the City of Kazo

Muscle training and aerobic workouts such as stationary bike exercise

On November 6, 2014, Shinya Kuno, professor of the University of Tsukuba Graduate School, made a presentation at the annual meeting of the Japan Society of Public Health.(A total of 108 people took part in the project in fiscal 2013.)

-Physical strength age: fall of 8.0 years -Muscle percentage: rise of 1.0 point -Body fat percentage: fall of 2.1 points -Medical expenditures: reduction of 78,882 yen / year (in terms of difference between project participants and a group selected for comparison)
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People in training to increase muscle strength

### Problems and Responses

#### ◆Before Project Implementation

Motivating and involving people not interested in health was a major challenge.

In an attempt to involve uninterested people, the prefectural government adopted an arrangement of giving points to those who altered their behaviour in ways that contribute to good health or showed bodily changes. The points can be exchanged for shopping vouchers and other items.

#### ◆After Start of Project

The projects have made steady progress, but the prefectural government plans to discuss effective ways of attracting new people to the projects and boosting the number of participants.

### Outlook

The prefectural government hopes to achieve a "Healthy Society with a High Level of Longevity," in which everyone can lead healthy and vibrant lives, and to work for the wider use of the Saitama Model for Health and Longevity, which was created through the Saitama Projects for Health and Longevity, through the activities of municipal governments. In order to clarify the results and challenges of the projects, the prefectural government plans to examine the effects on medical expenditures by comparing the medical expense statements of project participants and nonparticipants. These are aimed at extending healthy life spans and cutting medical expenditures.

### Reference URL

<http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/theme/kenkou/index.html> \*Japanese

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