## Kodomo No Hi

## What is Kodomo No Hi?

Children's Day, or Kodomo no hi (こどもの日), is a Japanese celebration which takes place every year on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May.

It is the final celebration in Golden Week, and it is an opportunity to celebrate the happiness and good fortune of children.

It has been a day of celebration in Japan since ancient times and was designated a public holiday by the Japanese government in 1948.

Kodomo no hi is especially well known as there are several unique traditions and decorations that are associated with the celebration of the holiday.

## History of Kodomo no hi

The origins of Kodomo no hi originally date back nearly 1500 years.

The Day was originally called Tango no sekku (端午の節句) and was celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth moon in the Chinese calendar (or the "Double Fifth").

Children's Day was originally known as Boys' Day and purely celebrated

boys and recognised fathers. This was because girls had their celebration on the "Double Third", known as Hinamatsuri ( $v \pm 3^{rd} of$ ), which occurs every year on the  $3^{rd}$  of March. In 1948, the Japanese government renamed Boys' Day to Children's Day to include both male and female children, as well as to recognise mothers along with fathers and family qualities of unity.

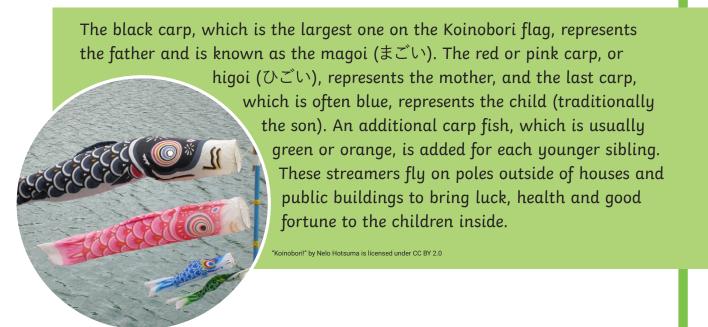
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## How is Kodomo no hi celebrated?

There are many lovely traditions associated with the celebration of Kodomo ni hi. The most well known are the carp-shaped windsocks or kites, known as Koinobori (CNO(E)), which are raised to celebrate each member of a family.



Within their homes, families may also display a samurai doll, which is sometimes riding on a large carp. These samurai dolls often represent the Japanese folk characters Kintarō or Momotarō, who symbolise courage and strength. Families may also display traditional

Japanese military helmets, or kabuto (かぶと). Samurai and military items traditionally represent symbols of honour and bravery.

Children perform in traditional Japanese plays, often in lead roles. Thousands of children also compete in the 'Kids' Olympics' held at the National Kasumigaoka Stadium in Tokyo.

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During this celebration, children eat kashiwa-mochi  $(m \cup n \cup n)$ , or rice cakes stuffed with bean paste and wrapped in oak leaves, to symbolise strength.





Chimaki (ちまき), or sticky rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves, are also eaten.

"ちまき(粽)" by fhisa is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Iris flowers, which bloom in early May, are placed in homes to ward off evil spirits. It is also customary to take baths known as **syobuyu** ( $l_{\pm}$ ,  $\mathfrak{F}\phi$ ), which are filled with floating iris leaves.



