Kodomo No Hi, or Children's Day, is a holiday dedicated to the health and happiness of children in Japan. It's the last day of the [Golden Week](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/golden-week-in-japan) holiday.
The day was formerly called Tango no Sekku, or Boy's Day. Some families still use the old name. There's a separate day known as [Hina Matsuri](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/hina-matsuri) dedicated to the health and happiness of girls.

The symbols and traditions of Children's Day stem from samurai culture and date back to the 1200s. The Samurai clans prepared boys from an early age for their role as Samurai with rituals, celebrations and symbols.  One such symbol, [Koinobori](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/koinobori) are carp shaped windsocks that have become a Children's day decoration. They are put up in great numbers all over Japan in the days leading up to Golden Week. Families with children put up at least one Koinobori per child. The meaning of Koinobori stem from an old Chinese legend about a carp who swims upstream against a strong current to become a dragon. The vigorous movement of [Koinobori](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/koinobori) in the wind is thought to represent a healthy childhood.

Boys throughout Japan display a set of Samurai armor in their home in the weeks leading to Children's Day. These sets have a Samurai helmet known as a Kabuto. Some also include armor, a bow and arrow and a miniature sword. These sets can be expensive and are often the most valuable possession that a young child owns.

Families enjoy special desserts for Children's Day such as [mochi](http://food.japan-talk.com/food/new/mochi) wrapped in oak leaves. Modern desserts such as Children's Day themed cakes are also popular.

Japan [has the most holidays of any country](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/japan-has-the-most-holidays-of-any-country) with a total of 16 national holidays each year.

Golden Week is a series of four national holidays in spring. They're on non-consecutive days but many people take off the gap days. Depending on the year, some of the gap days may fall on weekends. Many Japanese companies give the gap days as company holidays. In such cases, the company may completely shutdown for the week.

Meaning of the Holidays

Many Japanese people can't name the holidays of Golden Week. The Japanese government often redefines national holidays — leaving people confused. Currently, the holidays are defined as follows:

**1. Showa Day, April 29**
The birthday of Emperor Showa who was a controversial figure due to his role in WWII. Most people don't celebrate this but are happy it's a day off.
**2. Constitution Day, May 3rd**
The anniversary of Japan's new post war constitution that was put into effect on May 3rd, 1947.
3. **Greenery Day, May 4**
A vaguely defined holiday dedicated to nature.
4. **Children's Day, May 5**
[Children's Day](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/kodomo-no-hi) is the only day of Golden Week that's a traditional holiday that's widely celebrated. The day was celebrated for more than 1000 years as the Boy's Festival or Tango no Sekku. The government changed the name to Children's Day when they made it a holiday because [Girls Day](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/hina-matsuri) isn't a holiday.

The rituals and celebrations of Children's Day are related to samurai traditions that prepared boys for their role as samurai. Boys throughout Japan put out ceremonial samurai helmets in their homes in the days leading up to the holiday. Another decoration associated with Children's Day are carp-shaped wind socks known as [koinbori](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/koinobori). These are related to a legend about a carp that [swam upstream to become a dragon](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/koinobori). The vigorous movement of koinbori in the wind represents a healthy and happy childhood. Millions of [koinbori](http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/koinobori) are put up all over the country for Golden Week.