

Active ageing and security in Ichikawa City

■ Diversification of social situation and Ichikawa Healthy City Program

Recently, social circumstances in Japan have increasingly become complicated and diversified with such developments as increasing urbanization, the aging of population and a growing focus on information communication. This has led to the diversification of social, economic and environmental determinants that influence citizen health.

Ichikawa City has an area most of which belongs to a circle of an about 20 km radius with downtown Tokyo as its center. The city has many resources that contribute to healthy citizen life, including its natural environment and historical heritage; its streets extending over an area rich in tablelands and low lands; and festivals held in each season of a year and other traditional events with local characteristics. However, the city is no exception to rapid changes in social circumstances which Japan has been experiencing. As a result, large discrepancies are found between different areas of the city in population density, the ratio of aged population and other aspects.

To cope with these changes in social trends and particular local circumstances, improve various determinants of health conditions and thereby promote citizen health, the City of Ichikawa has established the Ichikawa Healthy City Program according to the WPRO guideline. Based on this program, the city has systematized its 260 ongoing projects related to health by classifying them into four fields that constitute the concept of Healthy City Ichikawa. Efforts to create a health city have been undertaken in the framework of these projects while maintaining the local characteristics of Ichikawa and protecting its precious resources. These four fields comprise Body and Mind, the central field in health promotion; Streets that refer to the improvement of social infrastructure to enhance the environment of human life; Society that focuses on the improvement of welfare and other social systems; and Culture that enriches spiritual life. As can be seen from this description, the city's efforts for health promotion focus not only on the health of individual citizens, but also on the environment of citizen life to support activities of its communities and citizens.

■ Status of aging of the population and the city's welfare programs for the elderly

The population of elderly people over the age of 65 has been increasing each year. Our country's population aging rate (the proportion which elderly individuals over the age of 65 account for in total population) has reached 21% in 2007, showing that we have entered an aging society in which one out of 4.8 Japanese people is elderly. The city of Ichikawa has a population aging rate of 15.4% in 2008, which is slightly more moderate than the national

average. However, the rate is anticipated to reach 19.7% by 2015, and signs of aging are becoming prominent in the city as well. Because of this, it has become an extremely pressing challenge for us to improve the citizens' immediate living environment, from providing assistance related to nursing care, to increasing opportunities for social participation, and to step up the planning and development of a pleasant and comfortable city filled with vibrant energy. To address these challenges, the city of Ichikawa has been focusing on an array of activities. These include (a) increasing forums and opportunities for social participation where elderly people can put their ample knowledge and experience to practical use, (b) increasing forums and opportunities to participate in lifelong education courses and health enhancement programs, and experience sports that people can enjoy throughout their life, and (c) establishing a living environment where elderly citizens can live with peace of mind in communities and family settings which they have familiarized themselves with.

In addition to the Ichikawa Healthy City Program mentioned above, the city has devised the Plan for the Health and Welfare of the Elderly of Ichikawa in FY2000 in order to tackle the tasks and challenges related to elderly people in a concentrated fashion. The basic principle of this Plan is realization of society that cherishes health and longevity where its citizens can live healthily and with peace of mind throughout their lifetime. To fulfill this principle, we have set up the five basic goals—lifelong promotion of health and fitness; boosting of motivations in life; promotion of nursing care services; establishment of a regional care setup; and establishment of a pleasant housing environment—and have been working to reinforce a variety of measures for elderly citizens so that each citizen can proactively improve their health and fitness throughout their life, and lead a more independent life. The Plan is currently in its third stage. Contents will be reviewed every three years until 2014 to address various tasks and challenges.

■ Content of application

【Title】 : “Healthy City Ichikawa: The Four Pillars” and the area residents' activities

The images that have been submitted depict residents who live and carry out activities in Ichikawa that aims at becoming a Healthy City as advocated by the WHO. The pictures capture these people from the perspective of the city's extensive cultural assets and rich environments, as well as the people's connections with the local community.