

## Town to Provide Free Health Care for Elderly

The Yomiuri Shimbun  
Japan

Tokyo's Hinodemachi municipality has decided to pay all medical expenses for the town's residents aged 75 and over beginning in fiscal 2009, it has been learned.

The Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry said it had never heard of such efforts by a municipality.

People aged 75 and over are, in principle, required to pay 10 percent of medical costs incurred at hospitals.

According to a Hinodemachi official, the number of town residents eligible to receive such services was 1,830 as of Aug. 1, representing 10 percent of the municipality's population of about 16,000. The number is expected to increase to nearly 1,900 by the beginning of next fiscal year.

Hinodemachi estimates its annual expenditure for the project will be about 85 million yen and plans to appropriate the costs in its general account budget for the next fiscal year.

Aiming to establish "the town most friendly to elderly people in Japan," Hinodemachi also plans to carry out new welfare measures to benefit the municipality's elderly, including bearing the whole cost of a complete medical checkup for people aged 75 or older, starting next fiscal year.

The opening of a large shopping mall in Hinodemachi in November has attracted new residents who have built houses in the town. The town expects tax revenues comprising fixed asset tax and residence tax to increase by about 300 million yen this fiscal year. Combining the increased tax revenues and funds created through other cost-cutting efforts, including cutting the salaries of the town staff, the municipality has been able to propose the budget for the project, according to the sources.

Hinodemachi Deputy Mayor Kiyoshi Hosobuchi said, "In response to such circumstances in which the elderly have faced difficulties such as the introduction of the new medical system for those aged 75 and older, we would like to implement the [free medical care] measures directly connected to the townspeople's livelihood."

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Courtesy: <http://www.globalaging.org/health/world/2008/Hinodemachi.htm>

