



Hina dolls ひな人形 "Hina Doll Festival" or " Girl's Day" is usually observed in Saitama on March 3. It can be a month later in some areas.

During the festival, people pray for the health and happiness of their daughters by displaying traditional "Hina dolls".

The origin of the Hina Doll Festival dates back to ancient times, when ceremonies took place not only at shrines but also at the Emperor's court. In those days people stroked their bodies with human-shaped papers or dolls in the hope of removing evil spirits which caused illness and bad luck. People held these kinds of ceremonies for new-born babies to pray for their healthy growth. After the ceremony they burned or threw the dolls into the river. However, as the years went by and the celebrations became solely for girls, these simple paper dolls gradually became more decorative and gorgeous. So instead of throwing the dolls away, the same dolls were displayed every year as lucky charms for girls.

Nowadays a set of Hina dolls -- including the Emperor, Empress, attendants, servants and musicians -- are given as gifts to a new-born girl for her first Hina doll celebration. The parents only display them during the season (from February to March 3) in the hope she will grow up happy and beautiful, just like the Hina dolls.

It was once believed that if the dolls remained in the room after March 3, the girl would not find a suitable marriage partner. So people took the dolls away as soon as possible after the celebration day. Removing the dolls at the proper time signified the importance of moderation, because in those days people believed moderation was key to happiness, especially for females.