

Health and Safety

Keep your host family address and your delegate identification with you in your wallet. When you are with your host family, don't go off alone. If you want to explore the neighborhood or to go shopping, you can ask someone when they might have the time to go with you. When you are at Camp, stay with your host and lodge members or other campers. When you are in Tokyo at the end and beginning of the exchange, stay with your chaperone or with Labo Staff. Don't go outdoors without him or her. There may be delegates from the Nihongo program or other exchange programs who are out walking around. Please don't follow them without checking first with your chaperone.

Japan, like Alaska, has earthquakes, and the country is prepared. Your host family knows what to do and you should follow their example. An earthquake alert may be broadcast on the television set and your host mother might quickly open the door (so it doesn't jam if the house settles) and then motion to you to get under the table, just like you learned in school. During a flood, people head away from the water, to buildings higher than four stories, and to hills. Interesting fact: you can often spot a hill by the trees, as temples and shrines are on hills and the trees are sacred and protected from being cut down.

Eat well while you are in Japan. Please don't be a "picky eater". A diet of snack food and sweets will make you sick. Take your vitamins.

Japan is a very clean country, but it's always a good idea to wash your hands and use hand sanitizer. One strategy some travelers use to avoid picking up extra germs is to "leave no fingerprints" by opening doors with their wrist, shoulder or elbow, putting their forearm on handrails and pushing elevator buttons with a knuckle instead of a fingertip.

If you do feel sick, be sure and tell your host mother. If you think you need to talk with your chaperone, ask to call him or her. If you see a doctor or are sick for more than a day or two, you **MUST** notify the chaperone.

Watch out for the sun. Japan is at a different latitude than Alaska and has more intense sunlight and a hotter summer. Prevent sunburn by wearing sunscreen and your sun hat. A long-sleeved lightweight shirt and long pants will also help prevent sunburn, if you are in the mountains. Don't forget to

protect your knees, ears and the back of your neck. Drink lots of water when it is hot and let your host family know if you are suffering from the heat. If you feel sick, you may be getting “sunstroke”. If your urine is really yellow, you need to drink more.

Any traveler will tell you that there is always a day or two during a trip when they are in a bad mood. 4-H delegates sometimes call this Grumpy Day. It may be a day when you are tired, a little bit sick, or when your brain feels a bit worn out from not always knowing what to do, a common situation when you are in a new culture. Some people experience it the first week. For others, it's around Day 21. Experienced travelers know that it will come, so when they have a day like that they don't worry about it because they know that it won't last.

Here are some tips from 4-H delegates on what they did on their Grumpy Days. Each person is different, so you can do what works best for you.

Write in your journal. You will feel better if you get your feelings out and on paper.

Don't write your complaints in a letter to your family because by the time they receive your letter, you will be fine and having fun and they will worry about you.

Read your journal to remind you what you wanted to do in Japan and why you are there.

Read books.

Take a walk with your host family.

Tell your host mother that you are tired and take a nap.

Think about how others are feeling. It will help you stop thinking about yourself.

Listen to music.

Try something new, such as ask your host mother to let you help make dinner, or show you how to cook rice the Japanese way.

Stay busy.

Sit on the deck or porch and just watch and listen. Don't talk for awhile.

Look at the list in your journal. You can make plans for the things you still want to do before you leave Japan.

Don't look at your album or the computer, as it might make you homesick.

Your host family is really looking forward to meeting you, to sharing Japanese culture with you and to learning some English by speaking with you. They will work hard to give you many great experiences. They will show you they care by doing many things for you. You can thank them by sharing culture with them and with their friends and club members, by behaving well, by being neat and clean and by being polite. Your great example will encourage other Japanese families to host Alaskan 4-H members.

Have a wonderful time with the kind people of the beautiful and interesting country of Japan!

