



Women's Health in Kumamoto

A Note on Gynecology in Japan:

Gynecology may be a bit different in Japan than it is in your home country. Japanese gynecologists tend to be more focused on prenatal care and birthing rather than sexual health. Also, there may be multiple doctors/nurses in the room than what you're used to for any given procedure.

English Speaking Gynecologists:

The best place to find English-speaking doctors is **Fukuda Women's Hospital** in Kumamoto City. **Dr. Fukuda, Dr. Yamamoto, Dr. Hagiwara and Dr. Obaru** are all used to foreigners, so it's easy to explain what you need from them. It's **located near the central post office and the Kotsu Center in central Kumamoto** and the clinic is **open Monday to Saturday 9:00am - 6:00pm**. You cannot make an appointment ahead of time, so be prepared for a long wait. The phone number is 096-322-2995.

Common Health Issues (and treating them):

The Pill - "経口避妊薬" (kouhininyaku) in Japanese, but more commonly referred to as "ピル" (piru). Available at private hospitals and at women's clinics, and must be prescribed. Prescription lengths vary from doctor to doctor (from 1 to 6 months), and you should clearly state how many months worth of pills you'd like to receive at your consultation. When you pick up your prescription there is a brief consultation with the doctor ("Has anything changed?" "How are you feeling?" etc.) and your blood pressure will be measured. It is covered by your insurance and the price runs from 2,000 to 3,000 yen per month. You can also have your preferred brand shipped to you with a written prescription from your doctor.

The Morning-After Pill - Only given in emergencies and is often thought to be unsafe. In Japanese, it is called 緊急避妊法. (kinkyuu hininhou) or in katakana 'moruingu afuta piru'. It must be taken within 72 hours after the incident, although the effectiveness decreases by 30% each day. This pill is not covered by national insurance, and the price can range anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 Yen. It requires a prescription. Fukuda Women's Hospital is one of the only places in Kumamoto willing to administer it.

Pregnancy Tests - 妊娠検査薬 (ninshin kensa yaku), or 妊娠判定テスト (ninshin hantei testo). The brand called "Clear Blue" is available from pharmacies and major drug stores for about 500 Yen. It is reportedly quite accurate and comes with English instructions. Some other brands available in most drug stores are: Check One, P-Check, and do test.

Pregnancy - If you decide to have a baby in Japan, you need to register the pregnancy at your city/town/village office within the first month. You will be given a mother and child information booklet, and the Tokyo Childbirth Education Association has information about pregnancy and childbirth in Japan.

Abortion – Abortion is legal and fairly common in Japan. It is not covered by insurance and cannot be done after the second trimester. Fukuda Hospital in Kumamoto City is best if you want anonymity. A first-trimester abortion usually costs 100,000-200,000 Yen, sometimes in cash. As a general rule, a letter of consent must be signed by the individual and the father of the unborn child to authorize an abortion. If the partner cannot be located, or if the pregnancy is the result of a sexual crime, one may proceed without the additional signature. Limited counseling is offered, so please take advantage of online resources such as: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/all-access/chat>

STI Testing - STI tests (性病検査, seibyō kensa) can be administered anonymously at the Kumamoto City Public Health Center, or by any gynecologists or general practitioners. Rumor has it that the test is covered by insurance if you have symptoms of an STI, but otherwise you will be responsible for the cost. See the Kumamoto JET website section on sexual health for more information.

Yeast Infections – “shinkinsei chitsuen” 真菌性膺炎 or kanjita” カンジタ. You need to go to a women’s clinic to be treated. They will test you on the spot, and if you have an infection, they will also give you your first treatment. However, they will likely ask you to come back either every day for a week, or again in another week. If that is inconvenient, ask if you can take the rest of the suppositories home.

Bladder Infections, Cystitis, Urinary Tract Infections – These will all require a trip to a women's clinic to get a prescription. Since the average Japanese woman is quite short, doses of antibiotics may be significantly lower than what you're used to at home. If you had this problem at home and were treated successfully, it may be useful to bring up past treatments in your consultation.

Periods - Pads and tampons can be found at drug stores, pharmacies, convenience stores and some grocery stores. The pads in Japan are bigger and thicker than what you might have available in your home country, so be wary that you're buying pads for menstruation and not incontinence. It's an easy mistake to make in towns where there are more post-menopausal than menstruating women.

As for **cramps**, Ibuprofen is available at most drug stores and pharmacies. The word to look (or ask) for is: イブプロフェン. Some of the more common brands are Eve and Meridon. Look out for the kanji or word for pain: 痛み (itami) on aisle signs and labels.

Female JETs are entitled to **Menstrual Leave** for “those days when a female JET is unable to work due to severe menstrual discomfort”. However, this leave is unpaid.



Is this how STIs
are spread モン??