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## Fukushima town estimates children's exposure doses

A town near the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant has started examinations to estimate the radiation exposure of young residents during the initial phase of the nuclear accident at the plant in March 2011.

Namie Town is between 5 and 30 kilometers from the crippled plant. Many of its residents evacuated to northwestern areas of the town just after the accident without knowing that radiation levels were high there.

In response to residents' health concerns, the town on Tuesday began checkups for residents who were 18 or younger at the time of the accident.

On the first day, about 30 children were examined at a medical station at a temporary housing complex in neighboring Nihonmatsu City.

A medical research team of Hirosaki University explained the purpose and method of the checks.

The impact of radioactive iodine is difficult to detect long after exposure, as the substance dissipates quickly. So researchers will collect blood from examinees to look for changes in shapes of chromosomes in lymphocytes.

Namie is the first municipality in Fukushima Prefecture to carry out such tests. About 850 children, or 23 percent of those eligible, say they want to be checked.

Analysis is likely to take several months. But Hirosaki University Professor Mitsuaki Yoshida says his team will do its best to notify the examinees of the results as soon as possible to relieve people's concerns.

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