

# MENTAL HEALTH

Many ALTs can feel down during the winter. This is quite natural but don't let yourself become depressed!



## DO!

- ✔ Socialise with others, even if it's "remote".
- ✔ Keep yourself and your apartment warm.
- ✔ Eat seasonal foods like "Nabe".
- ✔ Try some winter sports like skiing or snowboarding.
- ✔ Keep an eye on your fellow ALT's mental state and support them if necessary.

## DON'T

- ✘ Isolate yourself.
- ✘ Be too frugal when it comes to heating expenses.



# SNOW AND ICE

Especially if you're from a warmer climate, be careful when dealing with snow and ice.

## DO!

- ✔ Take special care when using outside stairs - they can be very slippery when frozen.
- ✔ Turn on any electric pipe warmers and close or put outside taps in "winter" mode.
- ✔ Clear snow away from your parking and places you walk before it becomes ice.
- ✔ Use a towel and warm water to gradually thaw any frozen pipes.

## DON'T

- ✘ Use water (hot or cold) to remove snow from walking areas - it will just become ice.



# MOULD

Differences in the inside and outside temperature can cause condensation that may lead to mould ("kabi"). This can quickly ruin the items or surface it's on and even have a negative impact on your health.

## DO!

- ✔ Air your bedding. If you have a futon, air it outside on sunny days to dry them out. Other days, roll it up or put it on a futon pallet to give the bottom a chance to dry.
- ✔ Keep an eye (and a nose) out for condensation and mould and wipe it down when you find it. You can buy mould spray to remove mould from surfaces such as bathrooms etc.
- ✔ Use desiccant pads and moisture traps in places where moisture can build up (inside cupboards, in corners, in stacks of clothes etc.)
- ✔ Air your apartment periodically to dry out any condensation with the cold, dry air.
- ✔ If you find mould on clothes, wipe it off and wash them immediately (or take them to the cleaners for suits etc.)

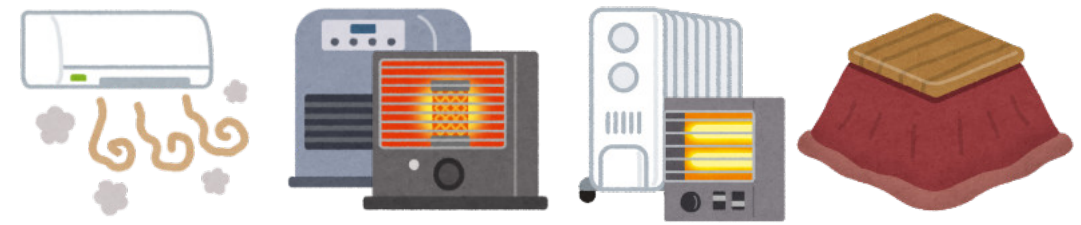


# SURVIVING

# WINTER

## HEATING

Japanese apartments are usually not very well insulated, especially if you are in an older building. There are many ways of heating your apartment. Here are the most common. Choose a method that best suits your needs.



**Air-conditioner**   **Kerosene Heaters**   **Electric Heaters**   **Kotatsu Table**

- |             |   |                             |   |
|-------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| ✔ Fast      | ✔ Fast (electric)                                   | ✘ Slow (oil heater)         | ✔ Fast  |
| ✘ Expensive | ✔ Non-electric models can work during power-outages | ✘ Expensive in larger rooms | ✘ Only heats table area                                   |
|             | ✘ Noxious fumes                                     | ✔ Good for small rooms      | ✔ Can use a pipe from a kerosene heater to share the heat |
|             | ✘ Need to refuel                                    |                             |   |

※ Other methods of keeping a room warm include supplementing your insulation with temporary under-carpet mats and putting bubble-wrap on the insides of your windows. You can also buy heated electric carpets and use an electric blanket at night.

(Pro Tip: Get a timer plug if you're forgetful, like me, to automatically turn these on and off on a schedule.)



# 安全第一 SAFETY FIRST



Every year the news reports homes burning to the ground, often as a result of improper safety precautions when it comes to heating. Don't put yourself and your neighbours at risk!

## DO!

- ✔ Keep a fire extinguisher in an easy to reach location.
- ✔ Keep a window open or circulate fresh air into the room every few hours when using kerosene heaters. Carbon monoxide is odourless so you might not notice you're being overwhelmed by fumes.
- ✔ Make sure your smoke detectors and gas alarms are in good working order.

## DON'T

- ✘ Dry clothes under kotatsu tables or very close to electric coil heaters. They may catch fire!
- ✘ Keep kerosene near the heater as it may ignite. I recommend keeping it in the entrance hall on newspaper to minimise any oil damage caused by spills while refuelling.
- ✘ Leave the apartment with heaters unattended - turn them off first.

# CARS AND DRIVING

Especially if you're from a warmer climate, driving in winter can be very dangerous. Take care of your car during this time so you don't need costly repairs!

## DO!

- ✔ Change to snow tyres before the first snows of the season (usually in early December).
- ✔ Pre-warm your engine before leaving home. This will reduce wear on the engine, help clear the car of any snow or ice and make it nice and warm inside.
- ✔ Reserve enough time to give you time to properly clear snow and ice from the car and its path before leaving.
- ✔ Buy some proper tools to use - they will make life much easier!
- ✔ Put anti-freeze wiper fluid in your window washing system to stop it from freezing. You can buy it from hardware stores and large shopping centres.
- ✔ Put your windscreen wipers up when leaving the car for a long period when its snowing to prevent them freezing to the glass.
- ✔ Keep a can of de-icing spray (like "Ice Off") in your car to help remove ice from windows when you don't have time to properly clear them.
- ✔ Use the sand or ice in the containers (or small boxes) by slippery streets. Maybe even keep some gravel in your car.

## DON'T

- ✘ Use water to clear snow and ice from windscreens and windows - they will crack.
- ✘ Rely on the roads to be properly cleared - most smaller roads are not ploughed.
- ✘ Keep to the same schedule as you did in summer. Leave with plenty of time to account for traffic caused by accidents or dangerous conditions.
- ✘ Drive without properly clearing your windscreen, lights and mirrors first.
- ✘ Panic if you start to skid. Take your foot off the accelerator and pump the brakes if they start locking.



# KEEPING YOURSELF WARM

There is a multitude of warm clothing and accessories available from shops all over Tome. Here are some of the popular ones

- ✔ "Hokkairo" - small bags of chemicals that react to produce enough heat to keep your hands warm for up to 8 hours. You may see students in class with them. Use them responsibly as they may cause light burns if applied to naked skin for too long.



- ✔ Winter boots and shoes - many shoes on sale in winter have special studs or even small crampons on the soles to help prevent slipping - be careful when going indoors with these as they may scratch the flooring surface (although you'd usually have changed from outside shoes anyway). If your shoes aren't waterproof you can buy canned "Bousui spray" to apply a temporary water resistance to regular shoes. For inside use, I recommend the "sock slippers" from Daiso as they're just like wearing socks instead of slippers but they have grip on the soles to prevent slipping.
- ✔ Hats, scarves, gloves, thermal underwear and even USB/Battery powered inner vests are available. You can get good deals on these at the New Year sales or pick them up for cheap at the end of the season for next year.