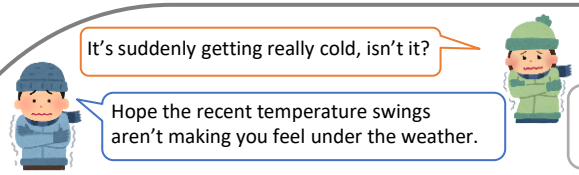
Health Bulletin

Doctor supervised — Sangyouhoken servise Inc.

Winter's Two Big Risks: Stroke and Heart Disease



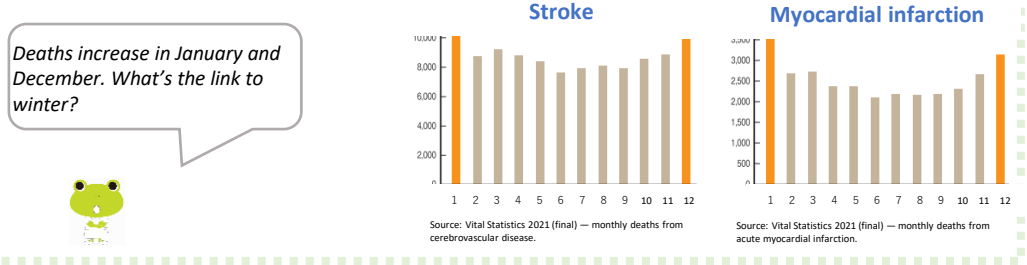
Winter is the season when we are most likely to fall ill, as the temperature drops sharply.
To stay healthy, it's important to understand how to take care of your health during the winter months.
When you hear "winter health problems," what kinds of illnesses come to mind?
Broadly speaking, they can be grouped into three categories:
①Seasonal infectious diseases (such as the common cold and influenza)
②Infectious gastroenteritis (such as rotavirus and norovirus)
③Circulatory disorders (such as stroke and heart attack)
In this issue, we'll be focusing on the third category: **circulatory disorders (stroke and heart attack).**

Breakdown of Major Causes of Death (2024)

Rank	Cause of Death	Percentage
1	Malignant neoplasms (cancer)	23.9%
2	Heart disease	14.1%
3	Senility	12.9%
4	Cerebrovascular disease	6.4%
5	Pneumonia	5.0%

https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/jinkou/geppo/nengai24/dl/gaikyouR6.pdf
Source: Monthly Vital Statistics Report (2024, Reiwa 6) — Annual total (preliminary) overview.

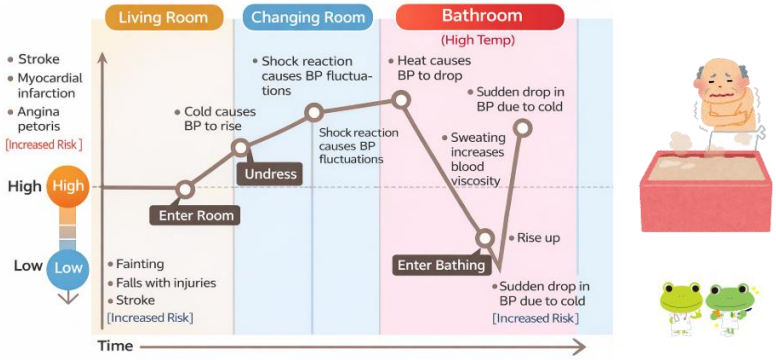
Vital Statistics 2021: Monthly Deaths by Cause (Stroke / MI)



Source: Vital Statistics 2021 (final) — monthly deaths from cerebrovascular disease.
Source: Vital Statistics 2021 (final) — monthly deaths from acute myocardial infarction.

Risk of heat shock!

Even at home, differences in temperature between warm and cold areas can cause rapid changes in blood pressure, which may lead to stroke or myocardial infarction. This is called **"heat shock."**
Heat shock occurs most often in the **bathroom**—for example, when you undress in a cold changing area and then suddenly enter a hot bath, or when you leave the warm bath and return to the cold changing area.



10 Tips to Prevent Heat Shock in Winter

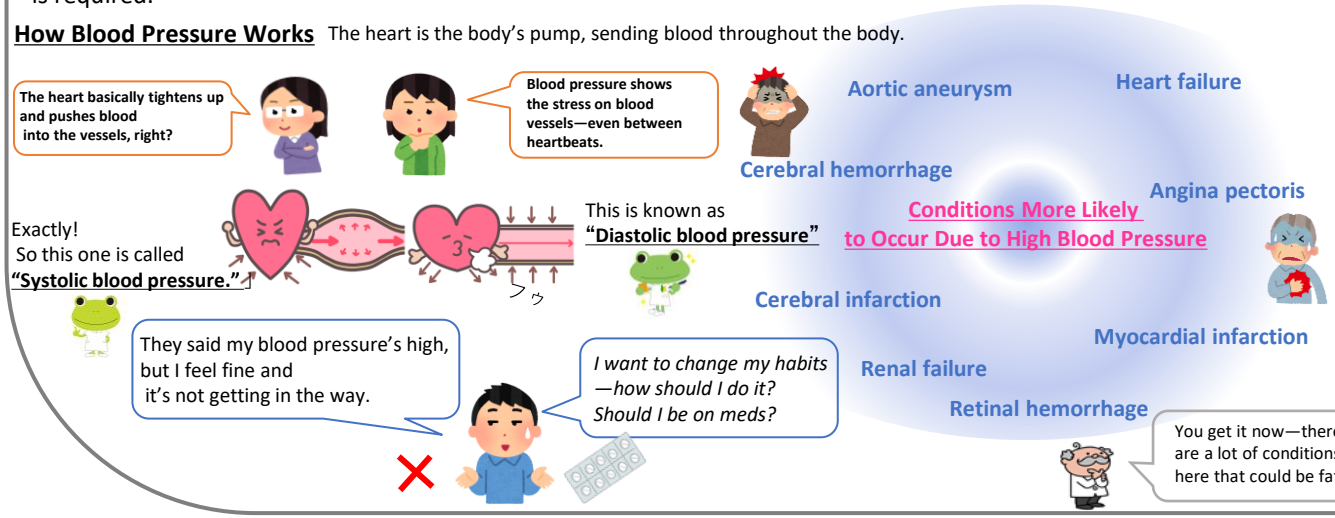
①Keep the **changing room** and **bathroom** warm during winter.
②Set the bath water temperature lower, around **38–40° C**.
Hot baths (**42–43° C**) can be dangerous because they may raise blood pressure.
③Keep bathing time **short**.
④Drink **one cup of water** before and after bathing.
⑤If an **older adult** or someone with **heart disease** is bathing, have a family member **check on them by calling out**.
⑥Do **not** drink alcohol before bathing.
⑦Avoid bathing if **systolic BP ≥ 180 mmHg** or **diastolic BP ≥ 110 mmHg**.
⑧Drink **one cup of water** when you wake up in the morning.
Sweating during sleep can make the blood more concentrated (thicker).
⑨When going outside in the cold, wear warm clothing (e.g., a **coat, scarf, hat, gloves**) and adjust to stay warm.
⑩If you smoke, **quit smoking**.

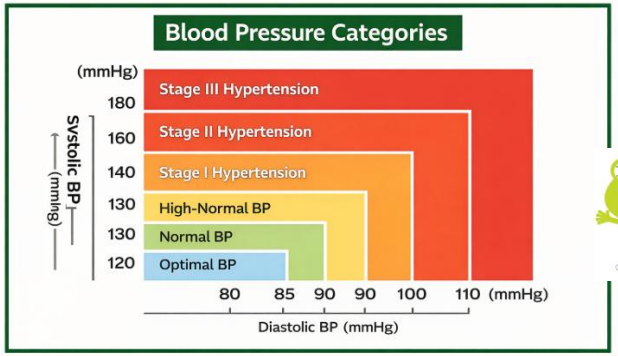
The key factor is the blood vessels.

In winter, cold temperatures cause blood vessels to constrict to reduce heat loss. This makes the heart work harder and raises blood pressure, increasing stress on the vessels—one likely reason strokes and myocardial infarctions rise in winter. Rapid temperature changes can trigger sudden blood-pressure spikes, so extra care is required.

How Blood Pressure Works

The heart is the body's pump, sending blood throughout the body.





https://www.med.kagawa-u.ac.jp/hosp/media/006/202311/02-07.pdf

Cerebrovascular Issues

Cerebrovascular Diseases

A stroke is a condition in which the brain is damaged when a blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked or ruptures. Strokes include the following three types. Depending on the severity, a stroke can be life-threatening and may leave lasting disabilities. The extent of brain damage depends on how quickly treatment begins, so if you notice any sudden or unusual symptoms, it is crucial to call an ambulance immediately. The word “stroke” implies that it occurs suddenly.

Stroke is the 4th leading cause of death.
It’s also the No. 1 cause of being bedridden and the No. 2 reason people need long-term care—pretty frightening.

Ischemic Stroke
A blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked, causing nearby brain cells to die. Dead brain cells do not recover.

Intracerebral Hemorrhage
A blood vessel in the brain ruptures and bleeds. The leaked blood causes pressure and various symptoms occur.

Subarachnoid Hemorrhage
A bulging area (aneurysm) in a brain blood vessel bursts, causing bleeding in the space around the brain. The mortality rate is very high for this type of stroke.

Prevention is most important, but if a stroke occurs, recognizing the initial symptoms and responding **quickly is crucial to reduce the risk of death or long-term disability.**

That’s why you should remember **ACT FAST**:

If you notice any of the symptoms described above, suspect a stroke. **“ACT FAST”** stands for moving quickly.

Prompt treatment, such as medication to dissolve blood clots or catheter surgery for ischemic stroke, and blood pressure-lowering treatment for **hemorrhagic** stroke, can greatly improve outcomes.

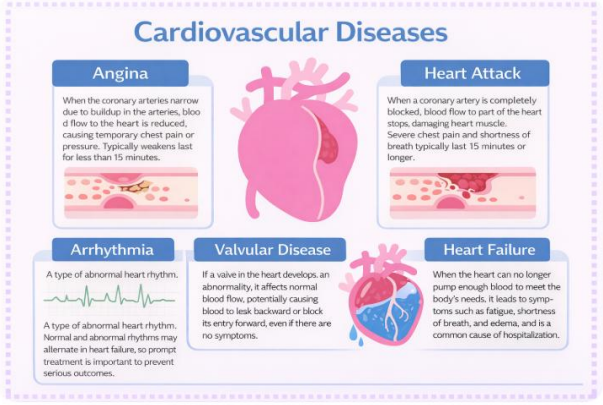
~90% of strokes are preventable.

cardiovascular disease

Coronary artery problems

A myocardial infarction (heart attack) occurs when a coronary artery becomes blocked and blood can no longer flow to the heart muscle.

The heart is an organ that functions as a pump, circulating blood throughout the body. It repeats contraction and relaxation about 100,000 times a day. Because every organ needs oxygen and nutrients carried by the blood, problems with the heart can quickly become life-threatening.

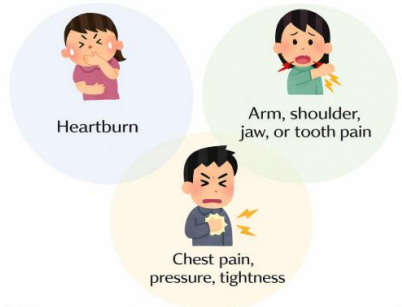


Myocardial infarction has a mortality rate of around 40% and is said to be the leading cause of sudden death. That’s frightening.

If you suddenly notice unusual symptoms even though you haven’t been physically exerting yourself, it could be a sign of a myocardial infarction (heart attack). What’s important to remember is that the symptoms may ease temporarily. Some people can “push through” and keep moving, but this is extremely dangerous.

From the moment a heart attack occurs, the heart muscle begins to die. The sooner treatment starts, the more the risk of long-term damage can be reduced, and the severity of aftereffects may differ depending on how quickly care is provided.

Many people who have a myocardial infarction (heart attack) die before reaching the hospital.
Conversely, if they do make it to the hospital, more than 90% survive.
If you notice anything unusual, call an ambulance immediately.
Getting to the hospital as quickly as possible is the most important thing.



⚠ If you experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately! ⚠

Stroke and myocardial infarction are both vascular problems, so keeping blood vessels healthy is key. Preventing atherosclerosis—linked to high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, and smoking—helps reduce risk. If any of these apply to you, start improving your lifestyle now and seek treatment if needed.

参考：https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/10900000/001114370.pdf