

12 December, 2013

Here's to a healthy and safe holiday season

The Emergency Department at Prince of Wales Hospital is preparing for the annual festive season peak in activity, during which increased presentations of up to 40 per cent have been experienced in previous years.

According to Dr Michael Golding, the Director of the Emergency Department, patients attend the Emergency Department over the festive season for a wide variety of reasons.

“We treat people who have suffered injuries due to accidents involving toys, skateboards, and bikes, and elderly patients suffering falls or other mishaps in the unfamiliar environment of relatives’ homes,” Dr Golding said.

“An increase in mental health presentations may also occur, as Christmas can be a lonely time for the socially isolated,” he said.

“Patients transported by road ambulance or airlifted to Hospital also peaks over the Christmas and New Year period, with one quarter of cases involving patients aged from 16 to 24, and more common in males.

“Additionally, summer heatwave conditions can lead to heat-related presentations, particularly for elderly patients or those with chronic medical conditions,” Dr Golding said.

The public are encouraged to look after themselves over the Christmas and New Year period by:

- Taking additional care on the roads and while participating in outdoor recreational activities.
- Using sunscreen and a hat.
- Ensuring that Christmas gifts such as bikes and skateboards are accompanied with protective equipment such as helmets and knee pads and are used under appropriate supervision.
- Keeping a close eye on elderly relatives with impaired mobility in unfamiliar surroundings, and ensuring that they have an adequate supply of prescription medications to last the holiday period.

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- Making regular checks on the well-being of the socially isolated.
- Taking precautions on very hot days such as maintaining hydration, minimising physical activity, wearing light clothing and avoiding excessive alcohol.
- Moderating drug and alcohol consumption, particularly on New Year's Eve.

To keep healthy over the festive period, there are also some easy steps the public can take to ensure they look after themselves.

Ms Myna Hua, Manager, Health Promotions Service, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District said the easiest way to avoid a holiday splurge is to limit your intake of sugary drinks, fruit juices and alcohol.

“If we consume more calories than our bodies use, the end result is an expanded waistline. Instead of piling your plate full of meat, save some room and head for the vegetable and salad bowls too and share your desserts with another person. It's all about portion control,” Ms Hua said.

“Don't just watch sport – play sport! It's not as hard as it sounds but there are plenty of ways to get moving without even trying, like getting on your bike with the kids, or heading down to the beach for a swim or when all the family is over, a little bit of fun can be had with backyard cricket. “

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