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## Top five tips for holiday health

As most of us look forward to relaxing and enjoying a well-earned break over the Christmas holidays, doctors at Prince of Wales Hospital Emergency Department are gearing up for what is their busiest time of the year.

Emergency Department presentations can increase by up to 40 per cent over the festive period with doctors treating a wide variety of illnesses and injuries.

Dr Michael Golding, Director of the Emergency Department, said: "We treat young 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.

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

"Patients transported by road ambulance or airlifted to hospital with major trauma also peaks over the Christmas and New Year period, with one quarter of cases involving patients aged from 16 to 24, and more commonly males.

"Additionally summer heatwave conditions can lead to heat-related presentations, particularly for elderly patients or those with chronic medical conditions."

Stephanie Watson, Clinical Professor at Sydney Eye Hospital, said typically there is a spike in the number of people presenting with eye problems over the summer holiday period due to poor summer eye care.

"We see many young people at this time of year who have gone out partying and forgotten to take their contact lenses out before falling asleep, or who have gone swimming in contact lenses. We also see people who haven't cleaned their contact lenses properly.

"This leads to an increase in the number of cases of eye infection which can result in loss of vision and corneal scarring," she said.

The public are encouraged to follow five top tips for holiday health to ensure Christmas and the New Year is a time to remember for all the right reasons:

- Ensure 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;
- On very hot days take precautions such as drink plenty of water, minimise physical activity, wear light clothing and avoid alcohol;
- Keep a close eye on children, particularly around water;
- Do not leave food out in the heat and only keep leftovers for a few days;
- Moderate alcohol consumption, particularly on New Year's Eve.

In addition, Professor Watson said it is important at this time of year to follow a few simple rules for summer eye care.

- Always wear sunglasses to protect the eyes from the sun's harmful UV rays;
- Take contact lenses out before going swimming;
- Don't go out partying and leave contact lenses in overnight.

Patients with non-urgent conditions should attend a 24-hour GP clinic or contact the 24-hour free hotline *Healthdirect* Australia on 1800 022 222, which is manned by a registered nurse.

Patients who are experiencing heart and breathing problems or who need urgent medical attention should always attend their local Emergency Department or contact 000.

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