

30 December 2024

Make this New Year's Eve memorable (for all the right reasons...)

Planning on partying to see in the New Year?

Go right ahead and have a GREAT time! – but make sure you are doing it safely, to ensure you have a fun night with your friends and family, rather than spending it staring at the waiting room wall at the hospital emergency department (ED).

Hospitals experience an increase in patient presentations during the Christmas and New Year period, but according to the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), many of these presentations are preventable with a bit of commonsense.



“Unsurprisingly, over-indulging in alcohol is one of the biggest reasons why patients come to the hospital over the festive season” **RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski, said.**

“Many choose to drink more alcohol at this time of year than they normally would – and this leads to problems.

“Make sure you take a safe and measured approach to your alcohol intake during the New Year festivities, to avoid a trip to the hospital ED.

“Ensure you are swapping out some of your alcoholic drinks for things like water, juice, soft drinks and even alcohol-free beer, and pace yourself on your alcohol intake.

“It also goes without saying that you shouldn't attempt to drive, swim, ride a bike or do anything that requires extra co-ordination or focus if you have had too much to drink...it's a surefire way to injure yourself and others.

“Unfortunately, the festive season is also a time when recreational drug users may take more drugs than usual – this is definitely something to avoid.”

Other dangers lurk around the New Year's Eve party, too...

“We often have people presenting with stomach pain at hospital EDs, either because they have over-indulged with their food intake at Christmas and New Year parties or have fallen victim to food poisoning” **Dr Lewandowski said.**

“Over-indulgence is easy to avoid – as with alcohol, pace yourself with your food intake, and ensure you are leaving a few of those tasty nibbles until later.

“Food safety, however, is a critical responsibility that falls on everyone, from the party host through to the invited guests – make sure you are only preparing and eating food that has been properly stored and cooked (particularly when it comes to cooking meat), ensure you wash your hands thoroughly before helping in the kitchen and before eating, and make sure those leftovers are not left in the fridge past their safe eating date.”

Dr Lewandowski said plain old tomfoolery and over-exuberance can also see people turning up at the ED over the festive season.

“This can include running around on slippery pool decks and falling over, diving into the shallow end of pools, being over-exuberant on bikes or skateboards (and falling off them), and even getting hit by cricket balls in the family backyard cricket comp – you name it, we have probably seen the result of it!

“The moral to the story? Take extra care when doing activities you normally wouldn’t be doing outside the festive season, and don’t use that very moment to ‘act the fool’ in front of family and friends – it may just become your reality!

“Also make sure that, if you are out and about enjoying the summer days, you stay covered up, wear a broad-brimmed hat, apply sunscreen, stay hydrated and stay in the shade to avoid sunburn, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.”

Dr Lewandowski said presentations at hospitals by those seeking mental health help are a serious side-effect of the Christmas and New Year period, particularly given many people experience loneliness, family tensions and other issues at this time of year.

“If you are feeling anxious or depressed, or considering self-harm, PLEASE make sure you reach out to a service like [Lifeline](#), [Beyond Blue](#) or [13YARN](#), or come down to your local hospital” **he said**. “It is critical that you come and see us so we can help you navigate what is a very confronting time of the year for many people.

“Christmas and New Year are also times of escalated rates of domestic violence. Those needing immediate assistance for domestic violence incidents or threats should call 000 for police and ambulance services. Support is also available at your nearest hospital, and by contacting organisations like [1800RESPECT](#).”

RDAA wishes all those in rural and remote Australia a happy and, most importantly, a safe and healthy New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day and 2025!

Photo of Dr RT Lewandowski

[Please click here](#)

Available for interview:

RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski
State specific contacts are also available

Media contact:

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890