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DON'T ROAST IN CHRISTMAS HEAT, DOCTORS WARN

With parts of Queensland set to swelter above 40°C on December 25, doctors are urging families to be wary of heat health risks as they celebrate Christmas.

Heat-related conditions kill around 500 Australians each year – making heatwaves far deadlier than bushfires, floods and cyclones.

AMA Queensland President Dr Bill Boyd said Christmas festivities increased several risk factors for heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

“At Christmas families often spend a lot of time together outdoors – either in the backyard or at the beach,” Dr Boyd said.

“Exposing yourself to the sun will cause your body to heat up and that’s when problems can occur, especially for older people who find it harder to lower their temperature.

“Some older people also close up their windows because they are concerned about their home’s security, but this will make their environment even hotter.

“Babies, pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers are also vulnerable – but the precautions needed are all obvious, simple and effective.”

Dr Boyd said anyone planning to spend time outdoors at Christmas should drink lots of water, stay in the shade, wear loose-fitting clothes and a hat. Staying in a cool, air-conditioned environment is the best preventative measure.

Dr Boyd also warned amateur athletes who plan on running during the holidays to stay properly hydrated or risk suffering heat exhaustion.

Heat exhaustion occurs when excessive sweating reduces blood volume and may cause paleness, an increased heart rate, muscle cramps, nausea, headache, vomiting and dizziness.

Heatstroke occurs when the body’s core temperature rises above 40.5°C and organs start to fail, leading to delirium, possible seizures and loss of consciousness. Sufferers will need urgent medical attention.

“The best remedy is to keep yourself cool and keep a careful eye on vulnerable people, such as elderly and isolated neighbours,” Dr Boyd said.

“If you begin to experience the symptoms of heat exhaustion, lie down somewhere cool, drink chilled water and contact a GP. In an emergency, always call triple-0.”

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