

Emergency departments brace for sprain drain

Emergency departments throughout Queensland are bracing for an onslaught of broken bones, kitchen cuts and burns, and alcohol or drug-fueled injuries, as the festive season takes hold.

AMA Queensland specialist emergency physician Associate Professor Jennifer Williams said doctors also saw a spike in food-poisoning, heat-related dehydration and the ill effects of indulging in too much alcohol or recreational drugs at this time of year.

“We’ll have more children - and sometimes their parents - with broken bones, as they try out the new trampolines, skateboards and bikes,” Dr Williams said.

“And with the heat at this time of year, we tend to see a number of cases of food poisoning and dehydration.

“Sadly, it is also a time where stress levels can rise and we’ll see more people with mental health issues as well as a lift in domestic violence cases.”

The State Government has urged Queenslanders against attending emergency departments (ED) with GP-type presentations through its campaign *Keep Emergency for emergencies* and AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said there were plenty of ways that people could avoid being an ED visitor this festive season.

“If you have a chronic medical condition, you should be seeing your GP now for a review, and to ensure you have enough scripts and medications to carry you over the break and public holidays, Dr Dhupelia said.

“If you are going away on holiday, find out where the local medical centre and pharmacy are located before you go and what hours they are open, particularly if you have a condition which may require monitoring or which can change quickly.”

Dr Dhupelia said it was important to find out what arrangements your GP Practices had put into place for the holiday season including opening hours and after-hours arrangements.

“Many clinics have extended hours and GPs are skilled to treat the festive season ailments as well as minor trauma including fractures and suturing. Many GPs have arrangements with after-hours services for home visits, and you should obtain these details before the holidays,” he said.

Dr Williams said people with non-urgent issues could also call the State Government’s 13 HEALTH line which provided advice from registered nurses.

“Emergency Departments are for patients who have serious and life-threatening conditions,” she said.

“Severe pain, intractable vomiting and dehydration, and breathing difficulties require people to call an ambulance or attend their nearest ED.”

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