

19 December 2019

## TOO MUCH CHRISTMAS CHEER CAN END IN EMERGENCY

Emergency department doctors are urging grown-ups to leave the skateboards and trampolines to the kids, keep food refrigerated and refrain from indulging in too much Christmas cheer this year.

Queensland hospitals are bracing for the annual onslaught of preventable injuries and illnesses with December the busiest month of the year for emergency departments.

Queensland Health figures revealed emergency department admissions were 16 per cent higher in December 2018 compared with the monthly average for last year.<sup>i</sup>

AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia did not want to discourage people from enjoying their holidays, but urged them to avoid behaviours that could result in a trip to hospital at this time of year.

“We see parents who thought it would be a good idea to try out the new skateboard or trampoline they bought for the kids and who end up breaking an arm,” he said.

“And there’s people who become extremely unwell from eating food that has not been stored properly or has been left sitting on the table for too long.

“Once you add alcohol into the mix at Christmas time, things often end up in the same place – the hospital emergency department.”

Monthly emergency department admission figures reveal the types of ailments most common in December were not life-threatening but could nonetheless dampen the Christmas spirit.

These included vomiting, moderate to severe pain, broken bones and lacerations.

“I would urge people to visit their GP for non-urgent medical issues over the holiday period, rather than add strain to already over-loaded emergency departments at this time of year,” Dr Dhupelia said.

### TIPS FOR FOOD PREPARATION AND STORAGE:<sup>ii</sup>

- Always wash your hands before preparing or eating food for at least 20 seconds, particularly after handling raw meat or eggs.
- Always cover raw meat in the fridge and don’t use the same chopping board or utensils for other foods you are preparing.
- Food poisoning grows more rapidly between 5C and 60C. Keep cold foods in the fridge until required and reduce the time between cooking and serving hot food.
- Thaw food in the fridge or microwave to keep it within a safe temperature range.
- Even if food has been refrigerated in a timely manner, leftovers should be eaten within 24 hours.
- Always wash fruit and vegetables to remove bacteria and any soil.
- Use-by dates are there for a reason. It doesn’t matter if it smells ok, don’t eat products that have expired.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/emergency-departments/resource/1b291227-c273-4529-ba43-f49694914ee8>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-events/news/food-safety-ways-to-avoid-food-poisoning>