

You don't have to come see us this Christmas, thanks

For most people summer in New Zealand means sunshine, beaches and food. Hopefully the worst that you'll need to deal with over the break is the odd case of sunburn, a mosquito bite or a minor allergic reaction.

Lindsay Wilde, Director of Operations for Medical and Community Health, says over this period the Emergency Department is invariably busy. Last year between Christmas Eve and January 4 the Hutt Hospital Emergency Department saw at least 100 people every day. (The highest numbers were on Boxing Day, New Year's Day and the day after New Year's). Over that time 80 people were treated for fractured bones and 70 people were seen with stomach bugs. "We get everything - from fractured bones from falling off skateboards, bikes, and motorbikes to heartburn and abdominal pain from over indulging in festive food," says Lindsay.

"People forget the basics: they spend too long in the sun while at a BBQ, cut the turkey after one too many drinks, or forget to drink enough water in the heat of the day."

We'd rather not see you in the Emergency Department this Christmas, so plan ahead and stay safe. Merry Christmas, but not 'many happy returns' from Hutt Valley DHB.



A better BBQ

Stomach bugs are too common at this time of year. If you're having a BBQ or eating outdoors, you'll have a much more pleasant holiday if you follow these tips:

- Wash your hands before handling food, after touching raw meat or poultry, going to the toilet, changing nappies, handling pets or gardening.
- If you're going out camping or hiking and washing facilities are scarce, pack a small bottle of hand sanitizer or antibacterial wet wipes.
- Don't overload your fridge - and keep it clean.
- Make sure all cooking surfaces and kitchen utensils are clean.
- Keep raw meat separate from cooked meat and other food (salad, etc).
- Make sure chicken, burger patties and sausages are cooked right through.
- Put leftovers in the fridge as soon as they're cool. If you reheat them, make sure they are piping hot.
- Don't let people who have been sick prepare food.



Alcohol, a BBQ and sunshine can be a dangerous mix. Keep it safe. The safest bet is not to drink at all - especially if you're driving. Failing that if you are heading out for a few hours a good rule of thumb is to only have one standard drink an hour. Make sure you eat whenever you drink alcohol, and try to have a glass of water for every glass of wine, beer or spirits.

Keep hydrated - and remember to arrange transport home.

Tips for holiday travel

Eat before you leave

It may seem obvious, but when you're in a hurry it's easy to forget to pack food for a long journey in the car. Planning ahead will help you avoid over-indulging on sweets, chips and pies. Have a good meal before you leave and pack snacks like nuts and some fruit.



Stretch your legs

It's tempting to try to complete a journey with as few breaks as possible. But fatigue is a real problem - too many people are killed or injured when drivers fall asleep at the wheel. Take rest breaks and make sure you stop and stretch your legs now and then.

Stay hydrated

You can lose a lot of liquid driving in the heat and the air on a plane is very dry. You also feel hungrier when you're even a little dehydrated. Drink plenty of water both before and during the trip. You'll feel a lot better for it.

Be smart about the sun

Lying in the sun feels great - but you only need 10 minutes in the sun to get your daily dose of vitamin D. Make sure you use sunblock.

Remember sunburn is not about the heat of the sun - it is caused by ultraviolet (UV) radiation. New Zealand has high UV radiation, even on cool or cloudy days. That means the risk of sunburn, skin damage and melanoma are high whenever we spend long periods outside.

- Wear loose, cool clothing that covers your arms and legs.
- Use a hat that shades your head and neck.
- Use a sunscreen with at least a sun protection factor of 30. Don't just use it on your arms and legs - cover your whole body including your lips, ears and your neck. Don't skimp - use lots and put it on 15 minutes before heading into the sun.

- **SLIP** into a shirt - and slip into some shade, especially between 11am and 4pm when the ultraviolet rays are strongest.
- **SLOP** on some sunscreen before going outdoors.
- **SLAP** on a hat with a brim or a cap with flaps.
- **WRAP** on a pair of sunglasses.

Not an emergency? See your GP



Call your GP for advice - even if they're closed you'll be put through to a helpline.

Or call Healthline 0800 611 116

The **After Hours Medical Centre** is open:

- 5.30pm - 11pm weekdays
- 8am - 11pm weekends & public holidays

Upper Hutt Health Centre runs an after hours clinic from 5pm - 8am on weekdays.

- They are open on weekends from 9am - 1pm and 2pm-6pm
- On public holidays they are open 10am to 5pm (please call first).



(04) 566 6999
main hospital phone number