

Media Release



The Sydney
children's
Hospitals Network

care, advocacy, research, education

14 November 2013

Drink responsibly during Schoolies Week

With Schoolies Week beginning this weekend, The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, (incorporating The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Sydney Children's Hospital) is reminding Year 12 students and their parents about the importance of responsible drinking and the risks associated with binge drinking.

Department Head of Adolescent Medicine at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Associate Professor Susan Towns, says young people attending Schoolies Week should be encouraged to enjoy their celebrations in a safe and healthy way; mindful of safe drinking limits and safety to themselves and their friends.

"Finishing school is an exciting time and a milestone that deserves to be celebrated, but personal and group safety is the key," Associate Professor Towns said.

"The current pattern of binge drinking we know is damaging, toxic to the developing brain and is associated with other dangerous risk-taking behaviour. Without proper control of the cognitive function, young people are placed at increased risk of accidents, sexual assault and embarrassment."

In 2010, The National Drug Strategy Household Survey reported almost two-thirds of males and more than half of females aged 18-19 years, placed themselves at risk of an alcohol-related injury at least once a month.

The report also highlighted that people aged between 18-29 years were more likely than any other age group to put themselves at risk of alcohol-related harm over their lifetime.

"Drink driving and impulsive, risky behaviour are two of the biggest concerns for young people affected by alcohol, particularly when in a social environment and when there is a strong influence from peers," Associate Professor Towns said.

For young people attending Schoolies Week, reassurance that it is OK to say no to alcohol and that celebrations can be just as enjoyable in the company of friends is important.

While the legal drinking age is 18, many parents think supplying alcohol to their underage children will limit alcohol consumption but in most cases, it exacerbates it.

"For those aged under 18 years, not drinking is the safest option. Both young people and their parents need support to maintain restrictions to alcohol and safe drinking patterns to minimise both the short and long term effects," Associate Professor Towns said.

In addition to the short term risks involved in excessive drinking including increased rates of trauma, assault, dehydration and gastrointestinal illness, long-term health consequences may also include cirrhosis of the liver, some cancers, chronic malnutrition and the risk of infection and brain damage.

Contact Details

Name: Sarah Palmer

Phone: (02) 9845 3364