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**SET A LIMIT BEFORE YOU START DRINKING AND DON'T END UP
 IN EMERGENCY THESE HOLIDAYS**

Australians should set themselves a limit before they start drinking these holidays, to ensure that they do not end up in hospital, the AMA says.

“The holiday season is a time when many people catch up with family and friends, and relax. For some, this means engaging in risky drinking and drug taking,” AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“People who drink excessively or take drugs not only put themselves at risk, but often put those around them at increased risk of harm.

“December and January are busy times for hospital emergency department staff and paramedics.

“These health professionals forgo time with their own families and friends to care for those who become ill or injured over Christmas and New Year. Unfortunately, many of these illnesses and injuries will be as a direct result of alcohol and drug consumption.

“One in 10 people arriving at the St Vincent’s Hospital emergency department have been drinking alcohol. On weekends, this rises to four in 10.

“Recent research found that nine out of 10 emergency physicians have experienced alcohol-related violence at work.

“Waste water testing has found a spike in illicit drug use over the summer season.

“Unfortunately, it is not only the people who drink excessively or take drugs who are at risk. Innocent bystanders can be injured or harmed when drug and alcohol-related conflicts escalate.

“People’s ability to make reasoned and wise decisions can be impaired when under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

“It is also important to remember that children’s exposure to inappropriate behaviour due to drugs and alcohol can influence their attitudes and behaviours in the future.

“If excessive or binge drinking is normalised at certain times of the year, children may grow up accepting and repeating the behaviour.

“Alcohol and drugs don’t have to be part of your celebrations. Sharing a drink or two with family and friends is acceptable, but it can very easily escalate to dangerous levels. Set yourself a limit before you start drinking, and stay out of hospital.”

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