

November 20, 2013

Prevent a spinal cord injury these holidays

Specialists at Liverpool Hospital are urging people this Spinal Injuries Awareness Week to take extra care both on the roads and during their summer holidays, with the festive season notorious for an increased rate of accidents that may lead to a permanent spinal cord injury.

Spinal Injuries Awareness Week ran from November 10-16 and was a national campaign aimed at raising the awareness of and promoting the prevention of spinal injuries.

Director of Trauma at Liverpool Hospital Dr Scott D'Amours said it was a timely reminder for people to slow down, and take a moment to think about the risks they take.

"Traffic related accidents account for a significantly large amount of spinal cord injuries, so drivers need to be aware that with more motorists on the roads there is an increased risk of having an accident that could lead to a very debilitating injury," Dr D'Amours said.

Currently there are more than 15,000 Australians living with either quadriplegia or paraplegia sustained through trauma or disease.

"People aged between 15-24 have the highest rate of spinal cord injuries, and the majority of those are transport related injuries, as well as accidents like diving into shallow pools or sustaining sports injuries or industrial accidents," Dr Damours said.

"A spinal cord injury is irreversible and devastating not just for the patient but their family and friends as well, so prevention really is the only cure," he said.

Be sensible – avoid high risk activities this summer:

- Always check the depth of water before diving in
- Slow down on the roads and stick to or below the recommended speed limit
- Don't ever drink and drive, or get in a car with a driver who has been drinking alcohol or taking other drugs
- Never move a conscious person complaining of spinal pain or numbness in the legs: wait for an ambulance
- Put nonslip mats on tiles in bathrooms to prevent falls
- Take extra precautions when playing sport and wear recommended safety gear