MEDIA RELEASE

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Three wise health and safety tips to guide you on your holiday journey

With the festive holiday season upon us, it is a chance to re-connect and celebrate with our loved ones and friends. But it can also be a time of challenge for some of us. The break in routine, combined with the stresses of the season, hot weather, and unexpected natural disasters, can take its toll. Those of us caught up in the season's activities can easily overlook other people's strains and tensions.

To help alleviate those potential tensions the team at Sydney North Health Network are asking us to take a pause in our day and make time to look out for one another with three wise health and safety tips.

"The holiday season in the glorious Northern Sydney region means taking a break from our routine. But disruptions to routines may also result in some of our usual support systems not being in place," says Lynelle Hales, CEO, Sydney North Health Network.

"Sydney North Health Network is encouraging our local community to take three wise health and safety tips with them wherever they go over the festive break. These are - think about holiday health needs; plan for emergencies; take the heat off. Keeping these three tips top of mind will help us relax a little more, yet be prepared," continues Ms. Hales.

Take the heat off – stay cool
Heat. It is everywhere at this time of year. Some days are like stepping outside into a fan-forced oven. Our summer days are notoriously long and hot. Very hot days can prove problematic for people with certain illnesses if they are not managed correctly. Some prescribed medications are affected by heat and can change our body's response to the heat. This can increase our risk of dehydration and to the adverse effects of medications. It is important to check your medicine's storage recommendations and guidelines around heat. Plan to stay cool and keep your medicines safe.

Find out more here -
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/people-most-at-risk.aspx
and see your GP if you have any questions.

There are some handy tips we can all follow for staying cool. These include drinking enough water even if you're not thirsty, avoiding being outdoors between 11am and 5pm, or going to cool environments such as shopping centres, libraries, or cinemas. You can find other great heat avoidance tips at https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/stay-healthy-in-heat.aspx.

Think about holiday health needs, whether you are away or having a staycation
Trips away, even for a day or longer - another summer break staple - are examples of how disruptions to our routine can affect us. If you, your loved ones, or your neighbours need regular health treatments or medicines, planning for changed opening hours is an important consideration.

It is also wise to check you have enough medication and set a reminder to take it with you. If you do forget it and are away from home, this is where a My Health Record will come in handy if you have one. You can visit a GP where you're holidaying, and they will be able to check your record to see what medications have been prescribed to you.

Also, if your loved ones or local community members are planning a holiday and have a level of dementia, the break from the ordinary may be disconcerting for them. Dementia Australia has a very handy guide on how to get the most out of your vacation. This can be found at https://www.dementia.org.au/files/resources/Travelling-with-dementia.pdf.

And if you are on a staycation locally your regular General Practice, Medical Centre or pharmacy may be closed or have irregular opening hours over the Christmas/New Year period. Sydney North Health Network can help with finding after-hours medical care for non-life-threatening injury or illness. Visit www.findahealthservice.com.au to help you find local health services.

Plan for emergencies - natural disasters
Another source of disruption is the realities – or threat – of bushfires and the resulting smoke in our Northern Sydney region and beyond. Our natural bush areas and national parks are a blessing; however, people living locally need to consider the risks of bushfire and smoke should a bushfire start.

Poor air quality becomes a problem due to smoke haze. People with a chronic respiratory or heart conditions should avoid outdoor physical activity, follow their prescribed disease management plan and check for updates from NSW Health (www.health.nsw.gov.au).

For those who use medicines or medical aids regularly, you need to ensure you have enough stock of these or carry them in case of an emergency.

To assist in general planning for a bushfire, the NSW Rural Fire Service has a range of useful resources at https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/bush-fire-survival-plan

Beyond medications, there are other factors to consider if a disaster hits – bushfire or otherwise. The good news is you're not alone when having to think about all the critical aspects of emergency preparation. The Australian Red Cross has done this for you. Their emergency preparation guides are a useful help for planning for such events.

These can be found at https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare Here the Red Cross has RediPlan, a useful disaster preparedness guide, helping individuals create a personalised emergency plan. It has sections for medication, pets, important phone numbers and account numbers, and more.

Although it may seem scary or tiresome to consider the worst-case scenario, planning may save you from hassles, illness, or injury over the holiday break. Remembering the three wise holiday health and safety tips can give you peace of mind, helping you have a less stressful holiday season.

-    **ENDS** -

Useful phone numbers

Healthdirect: 1800 022 222

National Home Doctor Service: 137425

myhomeGP: 1300 968 737

My Aged Care: 1800 200 422

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Dementia Support Australia: 1800 699 799 (24hrs)

After Hours Palliative Care Services: 1800 548 225 (5pm -9am)

Bushfire Information Line: 1800 679 737

Useful Websites

NSW Air Quality Index: https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality

'What is bushfire smoke?' factsheet:
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/bushfire-smoke.aspx

NSW Rural Fire Service Emergency Information: https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/emergency-information

'Young and old should heed smoke advice', NSW Health:
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/news/Pages/20191210_00.aspx

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About - Sydney North Health Network
The Northern Sydney Primary Health Network, operated by the Sydney North Health Network – a not for profit organisation, is one of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) established by the Australian Government to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. Our focus is on patients who are at risk of poor health outcomes. We work to improve the co-ordination of their care, so they receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.
https://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/