

## Partying safely - schoolies week

Every year in late November or December, thousands of Australian school-leavers head to holiday destinations around the country for schoolies week, to celebrate the end of school life. The intense partying can be lots of fun, but you need to be aware of the risks, which can include accidents, robbery, violence and sexual assault.

### Before you go

It helps if you plan ahead. It is also a good idea to work out your 'boundaries' before you leave -- being clear about your limits can help to avoid unpleasant or dangerous situations.

Suggestions include:

- Arrange for travel insurance.
- Take your Medicare card with you.
- Make sure you have ambulance cover.
- If you have private health insurance, know what you're covered for.
- Think about your values regarding sex, alcohol and drugs. Decide what you're prepared to do and where you will draw the line.
- Talk to your friends and find out where you all stand. Plan ways to look out for each other.

### General safety tips

Sometimes when you're in a group, you may find yourself doing things you would never do when alone. Remember to stick to your own values because you will be accountable for your own actions in the end.

Suggestions include:

- Obey the house rules – don't get kicked out of your accommodation.
- Keep your hotel room locked when you're not there.
- Stick with your friends and watch out for each other.
- Walk to and from the main schoolies area in groups. Never wander off alone. Avoid going off with people you are not friends with, particularly if you have had a few drinks.
- Agree with your friends beforehand where to meet if you get separated during an event.
- Make sure your phone is charged and has plenty of credit. Take your charger with you.
- Carry a spare \$20 and a phone card, just in case. Have emergency contact numbers with you at all times.
- Carry condoms and use them each and every time you have sex.
- Try not to drink too much. Pace your drinks. Stay alert. You are vulnerable to all sorts of dangers when you overindulge.
- Don't drink or take drugs and drive.
- Trust your senses. If you feel unsafe, move away from the situation.
- Be creative. If someone is hassling you and won't take 'no' for an answer, tell them you're about to throw up – they'll most likely back off.

### Avoid troublemakers

Be aware of troublemakers and avoid them. The main offenders include:

- **'Toolies'** – people who aren't school-leavers but who attend schoolies events anyway. They are often older and their motives for being there can be dubious.

- **Sexual predators** – plenty of creeps are attracted to schoolies week by the high number of teenagers.
- **Media** – some people act like idiots in front of cameras. Television crews have even paid teenagers to stage a brawl because it makes good footage.

## What to watch out for

Take some simple precautions so you can enjoy yourself without putting yourself or your whole future at risk. Some issues to be aware of include:

- **Drink spiking** – assume that anyone is capable of spiking your drink. Don't leave your drinks sitting around. If you all go off dancing at once, buy new drinks afterwards. Buy drinks with lids you have to open yourself. Don't accept water from anyone either.
- **Sexual assault** – this is unfortunately all too common during schoolies week. Look out for drink spiking. Going off with a stranger puts you at high risk, especially if you have been drinking, so don't go to a private place such as a hotel room with someone you don't know. Catch a cab at the end of the night rather than walking the streets. Males get sexually assaulted during schoolies week too, so these tips also apply to guys.
- **Brawls** – avoid gangs of males who seem to be wandering without purpose. Testosterone plus alcohol can sometimes equal a brawl. Violence tends to spread through a crowd, so don't hang around to watch if a brawl starts.
- **Drugs** – if you decide to take drugs, make sure you tell your friends what kind so they can give this information to ambulance officers or other medical staff in case of an overdose. Avoid mixing drugs with alcohol. Stay with your friends.
- **Physical injuries** – when outside, even on the beach, keep your shoes on and watch for broken glass and syringes. Don't sit down without checking behind you.
- **Drowning** – don't drink or take drugs and swim.
- **Theft** – don't leave your stuff unattended on the beach. Take it in turns to look after everyone's stuff.

## Where to get help

- Police Tel. 000
- Ambulance Tel. 000
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- Kids Helpline Tel. 1800 551 800
- DirectLine Tel. 1800 888 236 – for 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
- Youthsafe Tel. (02) 9817 7847
- Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) Tel. 1800 014 446 – for young people, 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
- DrugInfo Tel. 1300 85 85 84 – for information
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017 or TTY (for the hearing impaired) (03) 9347 8619
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017
- Action Centre (for young people 25 and under) Tel: (03) 9654 4766 or 1800 013 952
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line and CASA Tel. 1800 806 292
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service (Australia) Tel. 1800 737 732 – free telephone counselling hotline (24 hours, 7 days)
- 1800RESPECT – for real-time online counselling
- Victims of Crime Helpline 1800 819 817

## Things to remember

- Think about your values regarding sex, alcohol and drugs – decide before you go what you're prepared to do and where you draw the line.
- You are vulnerable to all sorts of dangers when you're affected by drugs and alcohol, so try not to drink too much.
- Stick with your friends and look out for each other.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

## Reach Out

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