

Australian Medical Association Limited

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AMA

AMA URGES SAFETY AND COMMON SENSE IN SCHOOLIES WEEK

AMA Vice President, Dr Steve Hambleton, said today that Schoolies Week is a traditional celebration for students after a tough year, but it is also a time of high health risk for young people.

Dr Hambleton, a Brisbane GP, said the focus has been on preventing the risks of alcohol and binge drinking but students should be equally careful and cautious about their sexual health.

“Schoolies Week is a time when young people can be pressured to have sex, and alcohol is often involved,” Dr Hambleton said.

“These kids have just finished school and want to have fun, but this doesn’t mean they should be pressured into having sex. Parents and peers should remind them that it is okay to take time to make important decisions about sexual relationships.

“Hasty decisions in the heat of the moment can lead to problems like sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

“Common sense and cool heads should prevail during Schoolies Week. All teenagers have brain cells – use them, don’t lose them,” Dr Hambleton said.

Young people thinking about having sex should:

- Talk to their partner openly and honestly about safe sex,
- Always make sure to use condoms (male or female),
- Stay in control and make sure both people feel comfortable enough to initiate and terminate sexual activity at any time,
- Know the facts about sexual health to make informed choices and decisions, and
- Know that it’s okay to say ‘NO’.

The AMA has a useful ‘Sex and Your Health’ brochure for young people that sets out a range of important health and medical issues. The brochure is at <http://www.ama.com.au/youthhealth/sex>

Background Facts

- 44% of males and 62% of females in year 12 in 2008 had had sexual intercourse. There was a 15% increase in Year 12 females in 2008 who had had sex compared to Year 12 females in 2002;
- 46% of females in Year 12 in 2008 had had sex without a condom (11% increase since 2002),
- 40% of females in Year 12 in 2008 had had unwanted sex, (an increase of 13% since 2002), and 20% of these because they were too drunk.
- 38% of Year 12 males in 2008 had three or more partners in the previous year (an increase of 23% since 2002), and
- 27% of Year 12 females in 2008 had more than three partners in the previous year (an increase of 14% since 2002). (Source: *National Survey of Australian Secondary School Students, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health, 2008 compared to 2002*)
- In 2006, there were 32,459 notifications for sexually transmitted infections among young Australians, and
- Rates of chlamydia notification among young people tripled in the decade between 1996 and 2006. (Source: *AIHW Australia's Health 2008*)

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