

Christmas rush for Helpline

While most are on holiday, the 0800 Drug and Alcohol Helpline volunteers will be working hard this Christmas and New Year season.

End of year parties, the stress and pressure of Christmas, New Year celebrations, or just the spirit of the season, are all reasons that make people less cautious about their alcohol and drug use, says Cate Kearney, Alcohol and Drug Association of New Zealand (ADA) Manager.

“Families and whanau often come together after months or years apart and this can be when the stresses of Christmas show themselves in peoples drinking more than usual,” she says.

“This means an increased number of calls to the national 0800 Drug and Alcohol Helpline, and the type of information callers seek over this period.”

The ADA provides a 12-hour confidential Helpline to assist people with concerns about addictive substances and is able to provide crisis intervention for callers when necessary.

“Typical calls come from people whose drinking behaviour is usually within the safe drinking range during the year, but who have consumed maybe twice or three times more than usual at the work party.” Kearney said. “Often they are worried about embarrassing or damaging behaviour that was out of character.”

Besides alcohol, the use of ‘party drugs’, particularly relating to ‘P’ or methamphetamine, ecstasy type drugs and the new legal party drugs (herbal highs), is also prevalent over the Christmas and New Year. “An alarming statistic is the number of people who may not normally try other substances, do so after higher than normal alcohol intake,” Kearney said.

When people call the Helpline they will be greeted by a Helpliner who can offer a listening ear, information on drinking and drug use, referral to services in the caller’s area, and support to look at the issues troubling callers. All information is confidential.

Women continue to make the most calls to the Helpline, but many of those are concerned friends or relations.

“These calls increase after the holiday season and are usually about family members, having noticed auntie, dad or son, are drinking more than they used to.” Cate Kearney

says. “People need to be aware that the ability to make safe decisions is dramatically reduced after the second or third drink.”

If people are concerned about their own or someone else’s drinking they can call the Helpline, which is open 10am – 10 pm every day except Christmas day and New Year’s Day.

For more information contact

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