

Don't let pre-Thanksgiving drinking end in tragedy

November 13 2013

The day before Thanksgiving, nicknamed Black Wednesday, is a time when college students are home and reunite with friends over beers or other alcoholic drinks in bars and restaurants. But what often starts out as a joyous celebration all too often ends up as a senseless tragedy.

"Thanksgiving is all about being together and celebrating with family and friends. No one wants to ruin those happy memories with a visit to the Emergency Department," said Dr. Mark Cichon, chair of the Division of Emergency Services at Loyola University Health System.

"Drinking and partying is something that most people can control and we all have a responsibility to help ourselves and to help each other stay out of harm's way."

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving is considered one of the busiest drinking holidays and one of the top drunken driving nights due to underage drinking. Cichon, who has more than 25 years of experience with Black Wednesday injuries, said, "Enjoy all things in moderation, especially alcohol."

Dr. Cichon offered these tips to avoid pain and embarrassment on Black Wednesday:

Educate. "Talk to your kids about the dangers of drinking too much. Make sure they have a strategy to get home safely if they have too much to drink," he said. "Students, make a plan among your friends to enforce limits and watch out for each other."

Pace yourself. "Alternate [alcoholic drinks](#) with non-alcoholic beverages and fill up on a hearty dinner or appetizers to avoid [drinking](#) on an empty stomach, which causes alcohol effects to be more potent," Cichon said.

Establish a timeout. "Establish a 'Go Home' time and stick with it," he said. "The longer you stay in a bar, the more you will be pressured to drink alcohol to diminishing effects."

Since 1995, annual patient volumes in Loyola's Emergency Division have increased from 29,000 to 53,000 patients.

The Loyola Emergency Medicine Division is classified as a Level 1 Trauma Center, providing the highest level of surgical care to [trauma patients](#). The division also has been recognized by groups such as The Joint Commission, the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems, the American College of Surgeons for Trauma and the Illinois Department of Public Health for Trauma, Burns, Pediatric and Emergency departments.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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