



Alcohol, Diabetes and You

**What about you?**

- How much alcohol do you usually drink? \_\_\_\_\_ drinks per day \_\_\_\_\_ drinks per week
- What do you drink? \_\_\_\_\_
- When do you drink alcohol? \_\_\_ before a meal \_\_\_ after a meal \_\_\_ with a meal \_\_\_ other
- Do you check your blood glucose when you drink alcohol? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_ No If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

**Why learn about alcohol?**

- Alcohol can make blood glucose too high or too low. You need to know when and how to drink to keep your diabetes under control.
- Alcohol has calories. You should fit these calories into your food plan, especially if you want to lose weight.
- You need to know if and when it is safe for you to drink alcohol.

**Alcohol and your body**

- Alcohol goes from your stomach straight into your blood. The alcohol in your bloodstream is highest 30 to 90 minutes after drinking.
- Your liver slowly breaks down alcohol. If you weigh 150 pounds, it takes about 2 hours to break down one drink. Two drinks take twice as long, or 4 hours.
- If you drink alcohol faster than your body breaks it down, the alcohol stays in your blood and affects other body parts. When alcohol affects your brain, you feel or act drunk.
- Some signs of too much alcohol, such as slurred speech and confusion, are similar to low blood glucose signs and symptoms.
- If you drink a lot of alcohol (three or more drinks a day), you may develop liver disease and other health problems.

**Alcohol and blood glucose**

- When no alcohol is in the blood, your liver keeps blood glucose from going too low by releasing glucose into your blood.
- If the liver is busy breaking down alcohol, it cannot release glucose into your blood.
- If you take insulin or diabetes pills, your blood glucose may go too low when you drink alcohol because the medicine and alcohol both lower blood glucose.
- The alcohol and sugars in many drinks can cause blood glucose to go too high.
- Alcohol can also cause high blood triglycerides (fats).
- Check your blood glucose after you drink to see how alcohol affects you.

**Safe sipping tips**

- It is best to drink alcohol only when diabetes is under control.
- Sip slowly to make the drink last. Try a wine spritzer (wine and club soda) or mix liquor with plenty of water, club soda, or diet soda to make it last.
- Diet soda mixed with alcohol increases levels of impairment.
- Excessive alcohol intake also increases hunger which may promote overeating.
- Limit yourself to one or two drinks per day.
- Drink alcohol with food, not by itself. Munch on pretzels, popcorn or crackers if you are drinking apart from a meal.
- Wear medical identification like a diabetes bracelet or pin. If you have a low blood glucose reaction, you want others to know that you have diabetes and are not drunk.
- Alcohol can change your judgment. Be careful with medicine, food and testing after you have had alcohol.
- Do not drive after drinking alcohol.

## How to count alcohol

- The chart below shows you the calories, carbohydrate and exchanges in alcoholic drinks and non-alcoholic beer and wine. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks can add many calories.
- Your best choices are dry wine, light beer, or unsweetened liquor (whiskey, brandy, rum, vodka or gin) mixed with plenty of low-calorie mixer, club soda or water.
- Talk to your dietitian about when and how you can have alcohol.

Drink	Amount	Calories	Carbohydrate	Exchanges
Light Beer	12 fl oz.	100	5g	2 fats
Regular Beer	12 fl oz.	150	13g	2 fats, 1 starch
Non-alcoholic Beer	12 fl oz.	60	12g	1 starch
Dry Wine	4 fl oz.	80-85	0-2g	2 fats
Sweet Wine	4 fl oz.	105	6-7g	2 fats, 1/2 starch
Non-alcoholic Wine	4 fl oz.	25-35	6-7g	1/2 fruit
Wine Cooler	12 fl oz.	215	30g	2 fats, 2 fruits
Gin, Rum, Vodka, Whiskey, Brandy	1.5 fl oz.	100	0g	2 fats
Liqueurs, Cordials	1.5 fl oz.	160	18g	2 fats, 1 starch
Daiquiri	4 fl oz.	220	2g	2 fats
Bloody Mary	5 fl oz.	115	5g	2 fats, 1 vegetable

## When to avoid drinking

- If you are pregnant.
- If blood glucose is out of control - too high or too low.
- On an empty stomach.
- If you have high blood triglycerides, nerve damage or eye disease.
- Before and after vigorous exercise.
- If you have had problems with alcohol abuse.
- If you take any prescription or over-the-counter medicine that alcohol reacts with, ask your pharmacist or health care provider.

## Set your sights

1. I will drink \_\_\_\_\_ (amount) of \_\_\_\_\_ (alcoholic drink) at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) with \_\_\_\_\_ (meal).
2. I will drink only \_\_\_\_\_ alcoholic drinks per week.
3. Instead of my usual alcoholic drink, I will have \_\_\_\_\_.

## Keep track

Keep a record of when you drink alcohol for one week. Bring it to your next appointment with your dietitian or provider.

Date	Time of drink	Time of last meal	Type of drink	Amount

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American Diabetes Association and American Dietetic Association

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu>