



American Diabetes Association
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Alcohol

Wondering if alcohol is off limits with diabetes? Most people with diabetes can have a moderate amount of alcohol. Research has shown that there can be some health benefits such as reducing risk for heart disease. But, moderation is important. If you have any questions about whether alcohol is safe for you, check with your doctor. People with diabetes should follow the same guidelines as those without diabetes if they choose to drink:

- Women should have no more than 1 drink per day.
- Men should have no more than 2 drinks per day.

*One drink is equal to a 12 oz beer, 5 oz glass of wine or 1 ½ oz distilled spirits (vodka, whiskey, gin, etc.).

Some Tips to Sip By

- If you have diabetes, practice caution when drinking. Do not drink on an empty stomach or when your blood glucose is low. If you choose to drink, follow the guidelines above and have it with food. This is especially important for those on insulin and diabetes pills such as sulfonylureas and meglitinides (Prandin), which lower blood glucose by making more insulin.
- Do not omit food from your regular meal plan and replace it with alcohol. (If you use carbohydrate counting to plan meals, do not count alcohol in your plan as a carbohydrate choice.)
- Wear an I.D. that notes you have diabetes.
- Sip your drink slowly to savor it and make it last.
- Have a zero calorie beverage by your side to keep yourself hydrated like water, diet soda or iced tea.
- Try a light beer or wine spritzer made with wine, ice cubes and club soda. Watch out for heavy craft beers, which can have twice the alcohol and calories as a light beer.
- For mixed drinks, choose calorie-free drink mixers like diet soda, club soda, diet tonic water or water.
- Do not drive or plan to drive for several hours after you drink alcohol.

Alcohol can cause hypoglycemia shortly after drinking and for up to 24 hours after drinking. If you are going to drink alcohol, check your blood glucose before you drink while you drink and for up to 24 hours. You should also check your blood glucose before you go to bed to make sure it is at a safe level – between 100 and 140 mg/dL. If your blood glucose is low, eat something to raise it.

The symptoms of too much alcohol and hypoglycemia can be similar – sleepiness, dizziness and disorientation. You do not want anyone to confuse hypoglycemia for drunkenness, because they might not give you the proper assistance and treatment. The best way to get the help you need if you are hypoglycemic is to always wear an I.D. that says "I have diabetes."

Alcohol may lessen your resolve to stay on track with healthy eating. If you plan to have a glass of wine at dinner or if you are going out for the night, plan ahead so you'll be able to stick to your usual meal plan and won't be tempted to overindulge.

Takeaways

- If you choose to drink alcohol, follow the guidelines above and have it with food. Talk with your health care team about whether alcohol is safe for you.
- If you drink alcohol at least several times a week, make sure your doctor knows this before he/she prescribes a diabetes pill.
- Drink only when and if blood glucose is under control. Test blood glucose (if prescribed) to help you decide if you should drink.

See "[What Can I Drink?](http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/what-can-i-eat/making-healthy-food-choices/what-can-i-drink.html)" for non-alcoholic drinking guidelines. (<http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/what-can-i-eat/making-healthy-food-choices/what-can-i-drink.html>)

Adapted from the book *Diabetes Meal Planning Made Easy, 4th Edition* (<http://www.shopdiabetes.org/102-meal-planning-made-easy.aspx?loc=Alcohol&source=dorg>), written by Hope S. Warshaw, MMSc, RD, CDE, a nationally recognized expert on healthy eating and diabetes.

Last Reviewed: September 30, 2013

Last Edited: June 6, 2014