



If you have diabetes and want to have an occasional drink, it's important to learn about alcohol and diabetes.

Before you decide to drink alcohol, there are some questions and issues to discuss with your health care provider when you have diabetes or other health problems.

Why might it be a good idea for me to limit or to stop drinking alcohol altogether?

- Your diabetes is not well controlled and your blood sugars are either too high or too low.
- You have high blood triglycerides (a type of fat in the blood).
- You have other health problems such as nerve damage, eye disease, or problems with your stomach or pancreas.
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- You have had problems with drinking alcohol in the past.

Will alcohol interfere with any of my medications?

When you have diabetes, your health care team will probably prescribe several types of medications to help control your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugars. You may also take several over-the-counter medications or supplements. Be sure to talk with your doctor, pharmacist, or diabetes educator about how to stay safe and avoid problems. Drinking alcohol may change the way these medications work.

If you decide to drink alcohol:

- **Limit how much you drink.** Keep it to one drink a day for women; two drinks or fewer a day for men.

One Alcoholic Drink. . .

- = One 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler; *or*
- = One 5-ounce glass of wine; *or*
- = 1.5 ounces of liquor (like vodka, scotch, or gin) in a shot or a mixed drink (with tonic or juice).

- **Always eat a meal or a snack when you plan to drink alcohol.** If you take insulin or diabetes pills, or if you drink on an empty stomach, alcohol can make your blood sugar drop. This is called hypoglycemia (blood sugar less than 70mg/dL). Eating a meal or a small snack when you drink alcohol can reduce your chances of having a low blood sugar reaction.
 - ✓ Check your blood sugar often to learn your body's response to alcohol.
- **Be careful with exercise.** Alcohol and exercise both lower blood sugars. To prevent low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), don't drink if you just exercised or plan to exercise.
- **Choose your drinks wisely.** What you drink makes a difference. Sweet

wines or mixed drinks made with regular soda or juices not only have extra calories, they also have carbohydrates that can raise your blood sugars.

- ✓ Use calorie-free and sugar-free beverages like club soda, tonic or water as mixers instead.
- **Be safe.** Alcohol can affect your judgment and behavior. It also can cause blood sugars to get dangerously low. Friends and family members could easily mistake symptoms of severe low blood sugar for indications that you have had too much to drink. To prevent this problem—or any embarrassment—make sure your family and friends recognize your low blood sugar symptoms, how to treat it, and how to help you in case you can't help yourself. If you take insulin or diabetes medications, always wear medical identification. **Never drink and drive.**

Calorie and Carbohydrate Values in Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages often have different amounts of carbohydrates and can contain a lot of calories. Drinking too much can make you gain weight and make your blood sugars harder to control. A registered dietitian or diabetes educator can show you how to use the chart below if you want to fit alcohol into your meal plan.

Drink	Amount	Calories	Carbohydrate grams
regular beer	12 oz.	150	13
light beer	12 oz.	100	5
non-alcoholic beer	12 oz.	60	12
dry wine	4 oz.	80–90	0–2
non-alcoholic wine	4 oz.	25–35	6–7
champagne or sparkling wine	4 oz.	100	4
sweet dessert wine	2 oz.	100	7
wine cooler	12 oz.	215	30
gin, rum, vodka, brandy, scotch whiskey	1.5 oz.	100–115	0
liqueurs, cordials	1.5 oz.	160	17
martini	2.5 oz.	156	0
margarita	8 oz.	420	80
piña colada	5 oz.	290	44
bloody mary	5 oz.	115	5

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- If you are hit, hurt or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor.