







Alcohol and diabetes

How can you raise your glass and keep control of the situation?

***Alcohol recommendations for people with diabetes: aim for no more than 2 standard drinks on any day.**

These recommendations are no different from alcohol recommendations for the general population. Eat some low fat carbohydrate-containing food when you drink alcohol.

STANDARD DRINKS					
Light Beer	Beer	Wine	Fortified wine	Champagne	Spirits
					
425ml	285ml	100ml	60ml	100ml	30ml
1 standard drink = 10g of alcohol					

**Australian Government National Health & Medical Research Council – Australian Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol 2009*

Note: If you are trying to reach your most comfortable healthy weight, your triglyceride levels are high, you have poor glucose control or have high blood pressure, aim to have 1 or 2 standard drinks on special occasions.

How does alcohol affect you?

- > **Weight gain** – alcoholic drinks are usually high in energy (calories / kilojoules), contain few vitamins or minerals and can contribute to weight gain
- > **Hypoglycaemia** (low blood glucose levels) – alcohol, in large amounts on an empty stomach, stops the liver from releasing glucose which in turn may result in hypoglycaemia for people on insulin therapy or some medications. Always drink alcohol with a carbohydrate-based meal or snack.
- > **Increases triglyceride levels** – alcohol in large amounts can increase triglycerides (a type of bad fat in the blood). High triglyceride levels increase your risk of heart disease. When you have raised triglyceride levels, your good (HDL) cholesterol can be low which is an unhealthy combination.
- > **Impairs judgement and can have a toxic effect on the body.**
- > **Can interact with medication** - check with your doctor.
- > **Can raise your blood glucose levels** – hyperglycaemia.

How does the carbohydrate (sugar) content of alcohol affect you?

- > **Hyperglycaemia** (high blood glucose levels) – consuming large amounts of alcoholic drinks containing sugar (eg sweet wines, liqueurs) may raise blood glucose levels (hyperglycaemia)
- > **Weight gain** – the carbohydrate and alcohol content in alcoholic drinks provides extra energy, which may contribute to weight gain.

Are there any benefits from drinking alcohol?

Some research has suggested that there may be cardiovascular benefits from drinking moderate amounts of alcohol, particularly red wine. However, if you do not drink alcohol, it is not recommended that you start.

Alcohol and diabetes

Party tips for sensible drinking

Count how many drinks you have, as the numbers add up over a long evening out. Skip the salty foods like chips and salted nuts, which make you thirsty. If you are thirsty, the best drink to quench your thirst is water.

Drink slowly from a smaller glass and have a few suitable non-alcoholic drinks as 'spacers' in between alcoholic drinks.

If you are finding it difficult to reduce your alcohol intake discuss it with your doctor, diabetes nurse or dietitian.

Talk to your friends about your diabetes and possible risks of a 'hypo'.

Sensible choices

Beers: light beer or low alcohol beer.

Dry wines: dry whites, dry reds, chardonnay, brut champagne, dry sherry.

Spirits: brandy, whiskey, vodka, gin, rum, dry vermouth.

Mixers: plain soda or mineral water, low joule / diet soft drinks, low joule tonic water. You could also try vegetable juice or unsweetened fruit juice or low fat milk in small amounts or a dash of bitters or squeeze of lemon.

These drinks have a higher calorie / energy content:

Sweet wines: late harvest, dessert wines, Lambrusco, muscat, 'stickies', moselle, spatlese.

Beer: regular, low carbohydrate beer.

Liqueurs: all – e.g. Galiano, Cherry Brandy, Tia Maria, Cointreau, Curacao, Baileys.

Fortified wine: port, sweet sherry.

Wine coolers: e.g. St Tropez, Coolibah Tropical, West Coast, Tropicana, Wild Lime / Peach / Mango.

Alcoholic sodas: eg Sub Zero, Two Dogs lemonade.

Pre mixed drinks: e.g. Vodka cruiser, Bourbon and Coke mixes.

Non alcoholic wines

Type of drink	Amount	% Alcohol	Energy (kilojoules)	Energy (calories)	CHO (g)
Regular Beer – e.g. West End Draught, Coopers Draught, Coopers Pale Ale, Carlton Cold	1 can (375ml)	4 - 5% average	568	140	11
Light Beer – e.g. West End Light, Carlton Light, Hahn Premium Light, Coopers Premium Light	1 can (375ml)	2 - 3.9% average	395 - 546	85 - 103	10-12
Low Carbohydrate Beer – e.g. Pure Blonde, Hahn Super Dry 3.5, Coopers Clear	1 bottle (330ml)	3.5-4.6%	343-448	82-105	3
Low Alcohol Beer – e.g. Birell (available from supermarkets), Coopers Birell Ultra Light	1 can (375ml)	0.5%	341	80	19
Red or White Wine (dry) – eg Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Riesling, Chardonnay	1 wine glass (160ml)	12%	500	120	0.5-2
Port	60ml	18%	395	95	7
Liqueurs – e.g. Frangelico, Kahlua, Baileys Irish Cream	1 nip (30ml)	15–55%	250–500	60–120	5.5-10
Spirits – e.g. brandy, rum, whisky, vodka, gin	1 nip (30ml)	40%	275	66	0

For more information

The Diabetes Centre, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, 8 Woodville Rd, Woodville South SA 5011
Telephone: (08) 8222 6771

© Department of Health, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved
Acknowledgements: RAH, Modbury Hospital, LMHS, Ambulatory & Primary Health Care Services