



## Your Body and Alcohol:

Alcohol moves very **QUICKLY** into the blood without being broken down (*metabolized*) in your stomach. Within five minutes of having a drink, there's enough alcohol in your blood to measure. Your liver does *MOST* of the job of breaking down the alcohol once it's in your body. But this takes time depending on your weight.

It takes a person who weighs 150 pounds about 2 hours to metabolize a beer or mixed drink.

If you drink alcohol *FASTER* than your liver can break it down, the excess alcohol moves through your bloodstream to other parts of your body. Brain cells are easy targets. When someone talks about getting a buzz from alcohol, this is what they are feeling.

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# Diabetes Education



← DRINKS containing alcohol are a normal part of social functions BUT drinking over time can hurt your liver and make your diabetes HARDER to control.

## Diabetes and Alcohol

### Diabetes and Alcohol; Do They Mix?

When someone who has diabetes is asked, "What would you like to drink?" how does someone with diabetes answer?

#### It Depends on Your Answer to 3 Basic Questions:

1. Is my diabetes under control?
2. Does my health care provider agree that I am free from health problems that alcohol can make worse. *For example*, diabetic nerve damage or high blood pressure?
3. Do I know how alcohol can affect me and my diabetes?

If you said "Yes" to all three, it's **OK** to have an occasional drink. The American Diabetes Association defines "occasional" as no more than TWO drinks a day if you are a man, and no more than one drink a day if you are a woman. This recommendation is the same for people without diabetes.

### What Increases My Risk of Having Low Blood Sugar?

#### Alcohol and Any of the Following Combinations:

- ✓ Empty stomach
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Insulin shots
- ✓ Diabetes pills



↪ Check with your health care provider to see if it's OK to combine alcohol with your diabetes medications.

**NOTE:** Low blood sugar when drinking is less of a risk for those with type 2 diabetes who control their diabetes with meal planning and exercise alone.



## Wise Drink Choices:

Sugar-free mixers can help keep your blood sugar levels within goal range. A few examples are diet soft drinks, diet tonic, club soda, seltzer, or water. This will help keep your blood sugar levels in your target range.

Light beer and dry wines are good choices. They have *LESS* alcohol and carbohydrates and *FEWER* calories.

**TRY THIS:** Mixing wine with sparkling water, club soda, or diet soda can make a drink last longer. or a “virgin” Bloody Mary made without alcohol can be very tasty.

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# Diabetes and Alcohol

## Alcohol and Low Blood Sugar:

It takes your body long to recover from a low blood sugar after drinking alcohol. If you have **LOW** blood sugar, you may need to treat it more than once as time goes by.

## Here Are a Few Very **IMPORTANT** Recommendations:

- ✓ Check your blood sugar before you go to sleep
- ✓ Eat a snack before you retire to avoid a low blood sugar reaction while you sleep
- ✓ Treat a low blood sugar with a carbohydrate such as oral glucose tablets or gels
- ✓ **NEVER** treat low blood glucose caused by drinking with glucagon shots\*

*\*Glucagon shots treat very severe low blood glucose **REACTIONS** caused by too much insulin. Glucagon works by getting your liver to release more glucose into your blood. But alcohol stops this process. So you need to avoid letting a low blood glucose level become severe. If you pass out, you will need glucose injected into your bloodstream by a health care professional.*



If you are asked to take a breath test for alcohol, the diabetes will not affect the results of a test for alcohol, even if you are having a reaction or have a fruity smell to your breath because of high ketone levels. If you are asked to take a test for alcohol and you have a choice, choose a blood test. That way, health care providers can check your levels of glucose and ketones, too.

## When Alcohol Is A Poor Choice:

Although an occasional drink may not hurt your blood sugar control, it can harm your eating plan if your goal is weight loss. Alcohol is called empty calories because it does not give you any nutrients.

Alcohol **CAN MAKE** some diabetic problems **WORSE**: Nerve damage from diabetes in your arms or legs can increase the pain, burning, tingling, numbness, and other symptoms found with nerve damage. Also, existing diabetic eye disease, high blood pressure and high levels of the fat called triglyceride in blood can be made worse with drinking alcohol.



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