

Food Fact - Diabetes and Alcohol

As long as there is no other medical reason why you should avoid alcohol, people with diabetes can enjoy alcohol **in moderation**. The principles of sensible drinking apply whether you have diabetes or not.

How Much?












The recommendations for alcohol for people with diabetes are the same as for those without diabetes:

No more than 14 units of alcohol per week for males and females, spread evenly over 3 days or more.

Every one should try to have several alcohol-free days each week.

Units of Alcohol

Watch the % ABV of your drinks and the size of your glass
Home measures can be larger than those served in pubs or restaurants

| 1 UNIT | 1.5 UNITS | 2 UNITS | 3 UNITS | 9 UNITS | 30 UNITS |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|
|  Normal beer half pint (284ml) 4% |  Small glass of wine (125ml) 12.5% |  Strong beer half pint (284ml) 6.5% |  Strong beer Large bottle/can (440ml) 6.5% |  Bottle of wine (750ml) 12.5% |  Bottle of spirits (750ml) 40% |
|  Single spirit shot (25ml) 40% |  Alcopops bottle (275ml) 5.5% |  Normal beer Large bottle/can (440ml) 4.5% |  Large glass of wine (250ml) 12.5% | | |
| | |  Medium glass of wine (175ml) 12.5% | | | |

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Other points to remember

- Never drink on an empty stomach
- Avoid sweet wines/ sherries/ciders and liqueurs
- Avoid strong beer, lager or cider – ideally these should be less than 5% ABV
- Many “Alco pops” are high in sugar and are best avoided
- Low alcohol beers and wines can be a good substitute for the real thing but can be higher in sugar so limit to 1 or 2 glasses
- Use sugar free/diet/slimline mixers and make short drinks into longer ones
- Avoid low sugar beer and lager as they tend to be higher in alcohol
- Alcohol is high in calories, so if you are watching your weight, limit your alcohol intake
- If you are drinking over a long period of time, try alternating non-alcoholic low sugar drinks with alcohol
- When you are drinking throughout the evening snack on something starchy
- Do not substitute alcoholic drinks for meals.

Be aware that continuous heavy drinking can lead to raised blood pressure and can make neuropathy (nerve damage) worse.

Type 1 or treated with insulin/meds please note

If your diabetes is treated by insulin or certain tablets, alcohol can cause your blood sugar level to drop too low. Make sure you carry some ID to let other people know you have diabetes, e.g. ID Card or medical tag. Alcohol can lower your blood glucose and hypoglycaemia may develop up to 16hrs after you have stopped drinking. Therefore, don't drink on an empty stomach and if drinking in the evening, have a carbohydrate snack before you go to bed. Don't miss breakfast and make sure it contains carbohydrates e.g. cereal or toast.

Leaflet produced by Western Sussex Hospitals Dietitians. For further information or to provide feedback please contact:
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