

---

# Diabetes and Alcohol

---

Eating healthy is the first step in controlling diabetes. The use of alcoholic beverages, including beer and wine, should always be discussed with your health care provider.

It is important for you to know how alcohol will affect your body.

- **Use of alcohol can increase your risk of low blood sugar levels.** Alcohol can prevent the release of the sugar that is stored in your liver. Your body may not be able to supply the needed sugar to your body and brain when you are drinking alcohol. Never drink alcoholic beverages if your blood sugar is already low or if you have not eaten.
- **Drinks that contain alcohol will increase your blood sugar levels when you first begin to drink them because they contain carbohydrate.** As the alcohol is in your body, your blood sugar may go lower. You may not feel these changes because of the alcohol. Always know what your blood sugar level is before you drink alcoholic beverages and do not drink alcohol on an empty stomach.
- **Use of alcohol can change how your medicine for diabetes works in your body.** Diabetes medicines and insulin are taken to lower your blood sugar levels. Your blood sugars may go even lower when you drink alcohol. Alcohol and many medications do not work well together. Talk openly with your provider about any alcohol intake.
- **Alcoholic beverages, including light beers and nonalcoholic beers, have calories.** Extra calories in your diet can cause you to gain weight or not lose weight as fast as you would like.
- **Always eat when you are drinking alcohol and be sure to include carbohydrate foods (examples are starches, rice, cereal, pasta, fruits, milk or yogurt).** Stick to your recommended portions sizes of foods, and never drink alcohol without eating. Alcohol causes problems with your liver's ability to rescue you from a low blood sugar. Eating helps to lower this risk.

- 
- **Some people should not consume alcoholic beverages.** You may be on medicines, have a medical condition, or a job where alcohol should be avoided. Discuss this with your healthcare provider.
  - **If you choose to drink alcohol, the current recommendations from the American Diabetes Association are:**

Women- 1 drink a day or less.  
Men- 2 drinks a day or less.

A drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, 1 ½ ounce of liquor (rum, whiskey, vodka, gin), or 8 ounces of malt liquor.

- **Some common examples of drinks that contain alcohol are:**

Margarita= 2 alcohol drinks  
Long Island Iced Tea=4 alcohol drinks  
Martini= 1.4 alcohol drinks  
Forty-ounce regular beer= 3 alcohol drinks  
Forty-ounce malt liquor= 5 alcohol drinks  
Pina Colada, 9 ounces= 2 alcohol drinks  
Bourbon and Water, 6 ounces= 1.3 alcohol drinks