

Going out / staying out

Things you need to know about diabetes and alcohol



Alcohol interferes with your diabetes in a number of ways:

- it can prevent the release of glucose (sugar) from the liver, even when the blood glucose levels (BGL) are dangerously low increasing your risk of moderate to severe hypos
- it will make it more difficult for you and others to pick up the symptoms of hypo (these may be mistaken for you being drunk)
- it can cause you to forget and not care about your diabetes management for the evening or the morning after
- heavy drinking binges can cause vomiting and dehydration which can lead to rapid development of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) which can lead to hospitalisation
- some types of alcohol contain lots of sugar; like sweet wines, pre-mixed drinks – RTD's, and any alcohol that is mixed with Coke or cordial; and they are going to raise your BGL
- Never drink and drive

Fact: It is illegal to drink alcohol when you are < 18 years of age

Fact: Pre-mixed drinks (RTD's) that contain alcohol will have lots of sugar they will affect your BGL

Start here

A night out – get it right (or planning on going to bed a lot later than usual)

Before you go out:

- check your BGL is before going out
- Eat dinner or have a meal containing at least 3 – 4 serves of carbohydrate (CHO)
- Don't ever miss your insulin – consider giving your long acting insulin before you go out if it makes it easier to remember to take it
- if you are planning a very active evening, reduce your evening long acting insulin by about 20% or alternatively on a insulin pump you may wish to decrease your basal rate by 20% (it may be advisable to discuss this with your doctor or diabetes educator, especially if you are planning a special outing or event)

During the evening

- eat 1 serve of CHO regularly (3 to 4 hours)
- know where your BGL is travelling during the evening and perform a BGL every 3 to 4 hours

At the bar

How the experts survive

Tips that really work:

- alternate non-alcoholic sugar-free soft drinks, or water, with alcoholic drinks
- pace yourself – drink slowly
- avoid shouts or rounds
- try reduced alcoholic drinks (eg light beer)
- mix your own drinks and dilute drinks with water, soda or sugar-free soft drink or mixers
- always have some hypo food and CHO with you (eg jelly beans and muesli bar)
- snack on CHO such as potato crisps, popcorn, hot chips, nachos whilst drinking

Avoid:

- drinking shots of straight spirits such as Tequila, Rum, Southern Comfort, Vodka, etc
- totally avoid mixing 'energy drinks' (e.g. Red Bull) with alcohol incredibly dangerous combination – can lead to serious heart arrhythmias (life-threatening irregular heart beats)
- don't let others top up or make your drinks

Remember its better to feel 'in control' and feel a little affected by alcohol then to be 'blind drunk' or 'out of control' and the responsibility of someone else

Try to reduce the amount of alcohol you drink – use the information below as a guide to recommended alcohol consumption

What is a standard drink?



A standard drink is defined as:

either

- one can of low alcoholic 'light' beer

or

- 2/3 can beer
- 285 ml glass of beer
- 100 ml small glass of wine
- 170 ml small glass of sparkling wine
- 300 – 375 ml of RTD's Drinks (e.g. Archers, Bacardi Breezers, Smirnoff Ice)
- 30 ml shot (e.g. tequila)

**How many standard drinks are okay for you to have in one evening?
NOT MANY...**

	OKAY	DANGEROUS	HARMFUL
Girl	1-2	3-4	> 4
Guy	3-4	4-6	> 6

Fact: Young people have been mistakenly arrested for public drunkenness when they were actually hypo, so don't forget to wear Diabetes ID!

Fact: You do not ever give insulin for the sugar contained in alcohol. Whether you are on insulin injections or an insulin pump you do not give insulin for alcohol – INSULIN is for CHO's not ALCOHOL!

The smart stuff

1. wear some form of diabetes ID
2. Don't drink too much alcohol
3. Eat some CHO every couple of hours – while you are out and before going to sleep
4. Always take your insulin that evening and the next morning – think reduction not omission!
5. Know what your BGL is before; during and after you have been drinking (especially before you go to bed or sleep) and the next day!
6. Test for blood ketones when your BGL is 15.0 or higher or just feeling sick
7. Not sure? Contact your doctor, or diabetes educator or diabetes after hours service for help!
8. Never drink and drive!

Sleep time

Home again (or sleeping at a mate's house)

If your parent/s or friend/s knows you have been drinking, they can remind or help you do the following before you go to sleep.

Before you go to bed:

- check your BGL
- treat for hypo if level is low (< 4.0)
- eat 1-2 serves of CHO before going to bed (eg sandwich, glass of milk, muesli bar), not based on your BGL

Note: if on an insulin pump enter your BGL and bolus for the grams consumed

- Have bedtime insulin if you haven't had it yet (it can be reduced up to 50% after 2 am)



'The hangover'



Fact: Hangovers are not fun!

Fact: Hangover cure – BGL, insulin and food (CHO's)!

The morning after (or 'hangover time')

Important! Arrange beforehand to have a parent or friend, or your alarm, wake you at a reasonable time (before midday) to check your BGL

In the morning:

- TEST your BGL and for blood ketone if > 15.0
- Ensure you have some morning insulin by injection or bolus
- EAT some CHO at least 2 – 3 serves
- Then you can go back to bed
- Keep a check on your BGL's at least 4 hourly during the day

Feeling sick?

You may feel sick from the drinking (or perhaps you forgot your insulin or cut back your insulin too much)...

CHECK your BLOOD GLUCOSE AND KETONE LEVEL!

- If your BGL is <15.0 and there are not ketones (<1.0 , or <0.6 on insulin pump), have your normal morning insulin, eat some CHO (or fluid equivalent, e.g. milkshake or Up and Go) and drink several glasses of water

Fact: High BGL (> 15.0) means you need to start the day as sick day management now – check for blood ketone level!

If your BGL is high and there are ketones present start sick day management

Sick day management:

If you need advice contact your doctor, diabetes educator, or diabetes after hours service immediately, then:

- Give extra rapid-acting insulin either by injection (given as 10-20% of total daily dose), or correction bolus, every 2 hours until ketones have cleared (< 1.0, or < 0.6 on insulin pump))
- Check BGL's every 2 hours and blood ketones if > 15.0
- Sip on fluid – sugary fluids if < 15.0 like lemonade, fruit juice or diluted cordial, however sugar-free if > 15.0 like sugar-free lemonade or diluted sugar-free cordial or plain cold water (NO caffeine based drinks)

Caution: BE CONCERNED!

- If you are vomiting or feeling sick do not stop your insulin
 - Vomiting is a serious sign
 - Check blood glucose and ketone levels
 - If your BGL < 15.0 reduce your insulin by ½ and sip sugar containing fluids
 - If your BGL > 15.0 do not reduce your insulin and sip on sugar-free drinks
 - If vomiting eases and you feel better –
 1. test your BGL every 2 hours,
 2. blood ketones every 4 hours,
 3. give extra insulin injected every 4 hours if blood ketones present (see above details), or correction bolus with insulin pump every 2 hours, or give your normal insulin if blood ketones absent
 - If vomiting continues, after 3 vomits contact your doctor, diabetes educator or diabetes after hours service for advice – you will need to come to hospital

The (really) stupid stuff

1. Not wearing your Diabetes ID at all times
2. Missing insulin - not taking insulin or reducing insulin too much
3. Not knowing what your BGL's are and NOT testing for blood ketones if you are feeling sick or > 15.0
4. Not carrying hypo food with you
5. Skipping a meal or not eating when you are drinking
6. Drinking and driving
7. Not telling people you are out with you have diabetes
8. Drinking more alcohol the next day



The stuff you probably don't want to hear but need to know

The bottom line

- Drinking alcohol is illegal if you are under 18 years old.
- Wear a Diabetes ID. Young people have been arrested for public drunkenness when they were actually hypo.
- If friends are worried about your health status while you are out, let them know they can call an ambulance service – Diabetes Emergency 000 (111 in New Zealand).
- Drinking 'energy drinks' or a highly caffeinated drink with alcohol is a dangerous health risk.
- Binge drinking is when you have more than 5 standard drinks in a few hours. It is dangerous and puts your friends in a difficult situation if anything goes wrong.
- Think about how much you drink. If you have a strong urge to drink everyday you have a drinking problem and should seek help.

Bottom line. If you are regularly drinking alcohol each day, or weekend, you are heading for trouble – think about it!

Direct line (confidential counselling & referral line):

0800 787 797

All enquiries are treated private – they are there to help advice and counsel you. The DrugInfo website is very informative and a great resource.



This guide has been adapted from the original document written by Dr Glynis Price and Rebecca Gebert CDE from the Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia. Modifications have been made in collaboration with the two other Paediatric Centres: Paediatric Diabetes Ambulatory Care service and Young Adults Diabetes Service at Monash Children's Hospital, Victoria, Australia, and the Starship Children's Health Paediatric Diabetes Service, Auckland, New Zealand.