Alcohol and diabetes

- Alcohol can cause problems with your blood glucose (sugar) levels.

- Alcohol and certain diabetes tablets or insulin can cause hypos (low blood glucose).

- Alcohol can make you forget to eat or to take your medications or insulin.

- Alcohol is very high in calories (kilojoules) and can make you put on weight.

A standard drink is:

- 285 ml regular beer
- 425 ml low alcohol beer
- 30 ml (nip) of spirits
- 100 ml glass of wine

Be Alcohol Smart
- If you drink beer, choose a low strength or light/lite beer.
- After a glass of alcohol have a glass of water.
- Use low kilojoule mixers like diet cola.
- Don’t drink on an empty stomach. Eat some carbohydrate foods first like crackers or bread.
- Men should keep to less than two standard drinks per day.

Tips for drinking less alcohol
- Women should keep to two standard drinks per day or less.
- Drink water or diet soft drink before drinking any alcohol so that you’re not thirsty.
- Sip alcohol slowly.
- Drink water or diet soft drink between each alcoholic drink.
• Dilute alcohol, like making a beer shandy by mixing beer with low kilojoule lemonade, or diluting wine with soda water.
• Drink low alcohol beer.

It is easy to be wrong about how much is a standard drink. Check the label on the wine or beer for the number of standard drinks it contains.

How can I avoid alcohol-related ‘hypos’?
Hypos (low blood glucose levels) are more likely to occur in people who take insulin or certain diabetes medication. Ask your health worker if this applies to you.

• Don’t drink excessive amounts of alcohol. The more you drink the more you are at risk of having a hypo.
• When drinking alcohol always tell someone that you have diabetes.

• Don’t drink alcohol on an empty stomach.
• Make sure you eat carbohydrate foods before and while drinking alcohol, like potato or rice or pasta or bread.
• While drinking alcohol, especially in the evening, always eat a carbohydrate snack before you go to bed and eat breakfast as soon as you wake up in the morning.
• Test your blood glucose level before you go to bed.
• Always carry some fast-acting carbohydrate such as juice or jellybeans in case of a hypo.
• Don’t drink alcohol after vigorous exercise.
• Always wear some form of diabetes identification.

---

**Signs of a ‘hypo’**

- Dizzy/light headed
- Not able to think clearly
- Headache
- Sweaty
- Faster heart beat
- Hungry
- Shaky
- Unsteady on feet

---

“Hands on Country”

This painting was created for Australian Diabetes Council by artist Chris Tobin, a Dharug man, and a traditional custodian in the Blue Mountains region. In the artist’s words: “The central part of this painting represents the relationship of the clan – it’s a unity of people looking out for each other while living independent lives.”