

Chapter 4: Alcohol

Diabetes and Alcohol

Tip

If you take insulin or a sulfonylurea, having more than one or two alcoholic drinks is risky behavior! It can cause severe hypoglycemia, especially if you haven't eaten.

Tip

Avoid sweet wines and drink mixes with a lot of sugar.

Mix liquor with water, club soda or diet soda.

Alcohol is a source of calories, much like fat in the diet, so it can cause weight gain. It is not converted into glucose, but it can affect blood glucose levels.

Alcohol lowers blood glucose and can put you at risk for hypoglycemia. This happens because alcohol prevents the liver from releasing glucose. The symptoms of hypoglycemia and drunkenness can be similar.

Check with your health care provider about alcohol. If he or she says that you can drink alcohol, you can include it in your food plan as long as you follow these safe guidelines:

- Drink alcohol only when glucose levels are in good control.
- Never drink alcohol on an empty stomach. Drink alcohol with a meal or snack that contains carbohydrates.
- Limit your alcohol to no more than one to two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.
- Examples of one drink with minimal carbohydrates are:
 - 12 ounces of light beer
 - 5 ounces of dry wine
 - 1 ½ ounces whiskey, gin, scotch or vodka
- Examples of drinks with higher amounts of carbohydrates are:
 - wine cooler
 - regular beer
 - margaritas
 - liqueurs
 - hard liquor with regular soda or fruit juice.

- Limit alcohol when you are trying to lose weight.
- Wear a medical identification bracelet that says you have diabetes.
- Do not overeat — it can cause hyperglycemia.
- Do not drink alcohol if you are pregnant.

The chart below lists serving sizes for different types of alcoholic beverages. It also lists the number of calories and grams of carbohydrate per serving of each beverage.

Serving Sizes for Different Types of Alcoholic Beverages

Amount	Type	Calories	Carbohydrate Content
12 ounces	beer (4.5 percent alcohol)	150	13 grams
12 ounces	light beer (2.8 to 3.5 percent alcohol)	75 to 100	5 grams
1 ½ ounces	whiskey, scotch, gin, vodka, rum, brandy, tequila (86 percent proof)	100	less than 1 gram
5 ounces	dry red wine, rose wine (12.2 percent alcohol)	85	less than 1 gram
2 ounces	dry sherry (17 percent alcohol)	80	2 grams
4 ounces	sweet kosher wine (11 percent alcohol)	130	12 grams
2 ounces	muscatel, sweet sherry port (17 percent alcohol)	95	7 grams
1 ounce	sweet or dry vermouth (12.6 percent alcohol)	35	4 grams
4 ounces	Champagne (11 percent alcohol)	100	4 grams
12 ounces	wine cooler (5 percent alcohol)	215	30 grams

Note: 12 ounces of non-alcoholic beer contain 60 calories.

Note: 4 ounces of non-alcoholic wine contain 30 calories.