

Fact Sheet

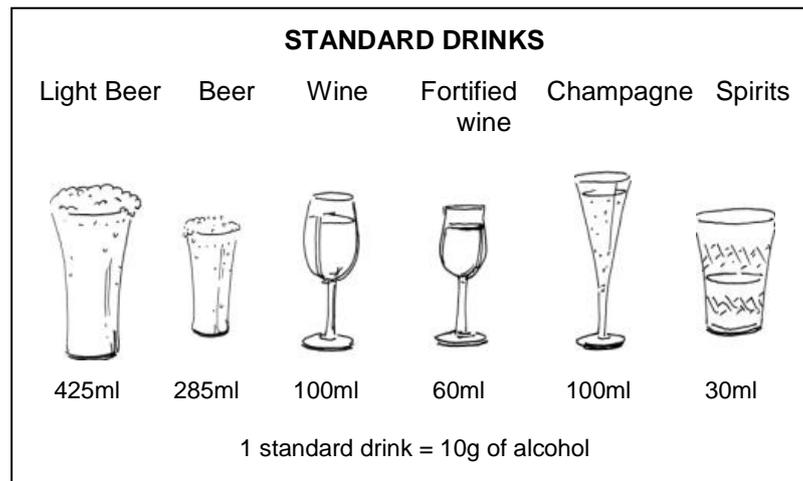
Central Adelaide Local Health Network
Diabetes Education Service

Alcohol and diabetes

Alcohol recommendations for people with diabetes

Aim for no more than 2 standard drinks on any day.

These recommendations are no different for the general population. Eat some carbohydrate containing food when you drink alcohol e.g. bread, crackers



**Australian Government National Health & Medical Research Council –
Australian Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol 2009*

Note: If you are trying to reach your most comfortable healthy weight, your triglyceride levels are high, you have poor glucose control or have high blood pressure, aim to have 1 or 2 standard drinks on special occasions.

How does alcohol affect you and your diabetes?

- > **Weight gain** - alcoholic drinks are usually high in energy (calories / kilojoules), contain few vitamins and minerals and can contribute to weight gain.
- > **Hypoglycaemia** (low blood glucose levels) - For those people on insulin therapy or certain diabetes medications alcohol in large amounts can stop the liver from releasing glucose. This in turn may result in hypoglycaemia. Always drink alcohol with a carbohydrate based meal or snack such as bread, crackers. Aim to have a bed time snack to reduce your risk of hypoglycaemia.
- > **Hyperglycaemia** (high blood glucose levels) - drinking large amounts of alcoholic drinks that contain added sugar (e.g. sweet wines, liqueurs) may raise blood glucose levels.
- > **Increases triglyceride levels (bad blood fats)** - alcohol in large amounts can increase triglycerides (bad blood fats). When triglycerides are raised HDL cholesterol (good blood fats) levels can be low resulting in an unhealthy combination. This can increase your risk of heart disease.

- > **Impairs judgement** - this can affect your ability to know if your blood glucose levels are low (hypoglycaemia).
- > **Can interact with medication** - check with your doctor.
- > **Can raise your blood pressure** - if consumed in large amounts.

Tips for sensible drinking

- > Count the number of drinks you have, as the numbers add up over a long evening out. Skip the salty foods like chips and salted nuts, which make you thirsty. The best drink to quench your thirst is water.
- > Drink slowly from a smaller glass and have a few suitable non-alcoholic drinks as 'spacers' in between alcoholic drinks such as diet soft drink or water. Try diluting alcoholic drinks e.g. beer shandy (with diet lemonade), diluting wine with soda water, or low alcohol beer.
- > Talk to your friends about your diabetes and possible risks of hypoglycaemia.
- > If on insulin check your blood glucose levels before bed. Aim to have a carbohydrate containing bed time snack such as bread, milk or dry crackers to reduce your risk of overnight hypoglycaemia. Carry hypoglycaemia treatment at all times (e.g. jelly beans) and discuss with your health professional whether a reduction in insulin is needed to avoid hypoglycaemia after drinking.

Better alcoholic drink choices

Beers: light beer or low alcohol beer.

Dry wines: dry whites, dry reds, chardonnay, brut champagne, dry sherry.

Spirits: brandy, whiskey, vodka, gin, rum, dry vermouth.

Mixers: plain soda or mineral water, diet soft drinks, diet tonic water.

These alcoholic drinks have a higher calorie / energy content

Sweet wines: late harvest, dessert wines, Lambrusco, Muscat, moselle, spatlese.

Beer: regular, low carbohydrate beer.

Liqueurs: all – e.g. Galliano, Cherry Brandy, Tia Maria, Cointreau, Curacao, Baileys.

Fortified wine: port, sweet sherry.

Wine coolers: e.g. St Tropez, Coolabah Tropical, West Coast, Tropicana, Wild Lime/Peach /Mango.

Alcoholic sodas: e.g. Sub Zero, Two Dogs lemonade.

Pre mixed drinks: e.g. Vodka cruiser, Bourbon and Coke mixes.

Non-alcoholic wines

Type of drink	Amount	% Alcohol	Energy (kilojoules)	Energy (calories)	CHO (g)
Regular Beer e.g. West End Draught, Coopers Premium Lager, Carlton Cold	1 can (375ml)	4.8% average	605 average	145 average	12 average
Light Beer e.g. Carlton Mid, Hahn Ultra, Coopers Premium Light	1 can (375ml)	2.7% average	420 average	100 average	9 average
Low Carbohydrate Beer e.g. Pure Blonde, Hahn Super Dry, Coopers Clear	1 can (375ml)	3.5-4.6% average	369-485 average	90-160 average	3 average
Low Alcohol Beer e.g. Birell (available from supermarkets), Coopers Birell	1 can (375ml)	0.5%	330	80	16
Red or White Wine (dry) e.g. Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Riesling, Chardonnay	1 wine glass (160ml)	12% average	500 average	120 average	3 average
Port	60ml	18%	395	95	8
Liqueurs e.g. Frangelico, Kahlua, Baileys Irish Cream	1 nip (30ml)	16-55% average	250-500 average	60-120 average	4-19 average
Spirits e.g. brandy, rum, whisky, vodka, gin	1 nip (30ml)	40% average	275 average	65 average	0 average

Reference: Allan Borushek's *Calorie, Fat & Carbohydrate Counter*, 2017

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The information contained within the publication does not constitute medical advice, and is for general information only. Readers should always seek independent, professional advice where appropriate.

For more information

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