

# Alcohol and Blood Sugar: Sip Smart, Stay Safe!

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For people with diabetes, managing blood sugar is an important part of staying healthy. Alcohol can have unpredictable effects on blood sugar levels, so it's important to know how it affects your body.

## **How might alcohol affect my blood sugar?**

Alcohol can cause your blood sugar to drop too low, especially if you're drinking on an empty stomach. When you drink, your liver will focus on breaking down alcohol instead of releasing sugar, which can cause low blood sugar. This effect may be delayed, which means you may only start noticing the signs of low blood sugar several hours after drinking.

## **What are some signs and symptoms of low blood sugar caused by alcohol?**

Some common signs of low blood sugar from drinking alcohol include:

- Dizziness
- Shakiness
- Confusion
- Slurred speech

Since these symptoms are very similar to alcohol intoxication (how someone may feel when they've had too much to drink), it's easy to miss them.

## **What are some best practices for drinking alcohol when I have diabetes?**

- **Limit how much alcohol you drink.** Based on health guidelines, men should have no more than 2 drinks per day, and women should have no more than 1 drink per day.
- Always carry a source of fast-acting glucose, like glucose tablets, if you plan to drink.
- Never drink on an empty stomach. Eat a balanced meal before drinking to help keep your blood sugar levels stable.
  - Always give insulin for the food you eat.
  - Do not give insulin for carbohydrates naturally found in alcohol.
  - You may need insulin for added sugars, such as those in mixed drinks.
- Check your blood sugar frequently before, during, and several hours after drinking.
  - Be aware that glucagon may not work when you have been drinking.
- Drink water and stay hydrated. Alcohol can cause dehydration, which may affect your blood sugar control.
- Always make sure you have someone with you who knows you have diabetes, and wear your diabetes identification (bracelet, watch, necklace, etc.). In case of an emergency, it's extremely important that others know you have diabetes.

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