Alcohol & Diabetes

How alcohol affects your blood sugar

- **Your liver:** Your liver stores some sugar (glucose) from food. It releases this sugar when you need it. When you drink alcohol, your liver breaks down alcohol instead of releasing sugar. This can cause low blood sugar, especially if you take insulin or certain diabetes medicines.
- **Hidden sugars:** Many alcoholic drinks have added sugar. This can raise your blood sugar.
- **Delayed low blood sugar:** Your blood sugar may drop hours after drinking. This is more likely if you skip meals or exercise.
- **Extra calories:** Alcohol adds calories. This can lead to weight gain and make blood sugar harder to manage.

Recommended limits for alcohol

- Men: Up to two (2) drinks per day
- Women: Up to one (1) drink per day

One (1) regular drink equals

- 12 ounces of beer (5% alcohol)
- 5 ounces of wine (12% alcohol)
- 1.5 ounces of liquor (40% alcohol)

How to stay safe when drinking alcohol

- Avoid drinking on an empty stomach. When you drink, eat a meal or a snack with carbohydrates.
- Check your blood sugar often.
  - Check before you drink.
  - Check before you go to bed.
  - If your blood sugar is below 100, eat a snack before you sleep.
- Know the signs of low blood sugar.
  - Shaking, sweating, confusion, or slurred speech.
- Mixers
  - Avoid sweet mixers. Choose diet or sugar-free options instead of soda or juice.
- Have water between alcoholic drinks to stay hydrated.
- Wear a medical ID that says you have diabetes.
- Talk to your doctor before drinking if you have high triglycerides, liver disease, nerve pain, or a history of pancreatitis.

CENTRAL HEALTH

Common alcoholic beverages and nutrition facts

Beverage	Serving size	Calories (approximate)	Carbohydrates (g)
Light beer	12 ounces	100	5
Regular beer	12 ounces	150	13
Craft/IPA beer	12 ounces	200+	15–20
Wine (dry, red or white)	5 ounces	120	4
Sweet/dessert wine	3 ounces	165	14
Champagne	5 ounces	100	2
Regular margarita	4 ounces	170	13
Rum and diet cola	8 ounces	100	0
Regular gin and tonic	8 ounces	180	15
Vodka, rum, gin, and whiskey (straight)	1.5 ounces	100	0

Key takeaways

- Eat when you drink alcohol. Check your blood sugar often.
- Choose drinks with less sugar. Drink slowly. Drink water between alcoholic beverages.
- When you don't know what to do, avoid drinking. Your health and safety come first.