

# Alcohol use and diabetes



ALASKA NATIVE  
TRIBAL HEALTH  
CONSORTIUM

## Alcohol use and diabetes

If you choose to drink alcohol, there are some important things to keep in mind when you have diabetes.

### Drinking alcohol when you have diabetes can cause:

- Low blood sugar
- Weight gain
- Problems with some medications

If you wish to drink alcohol, talk to your diabetes team about how to avoid these three problems.

## Low blood sugar and alcohol

Your body must have some blood sugar all the time. One of the jobs of your liver is to make sugar for your blood when you sleep and for between meals. It keeps your blood sugar from going too low. Your liver also works to breakdown and remove alcohol from the body. When you drink alcohol, your liver makes the breakdown of alcohol its priority instead of keeping blood sugar from going too low. This can cause hypoglycemia in people with diabetes.

## Tips for low blood sugar and alcohol

- If you are going to drink alcohol, it is important to eat a meal or snack with carbohydrates.
- Alcohol can affect your blood sugar for up to 12 hours. If you are going to bed, check your blood sugar first. If your blood sugar is less than 100, eat a good snack with carbohydrates, like half of a sandwich.

### The American Diabetes Association recommends:

- No more than 1 drink per day for women
- No more than 2 drinks per day for men

A drink is defined as a 12-oz. beer OR 5 ounces of wine OR 1 ounce of hard liquor (a shot).

## Alcohol and weight gain

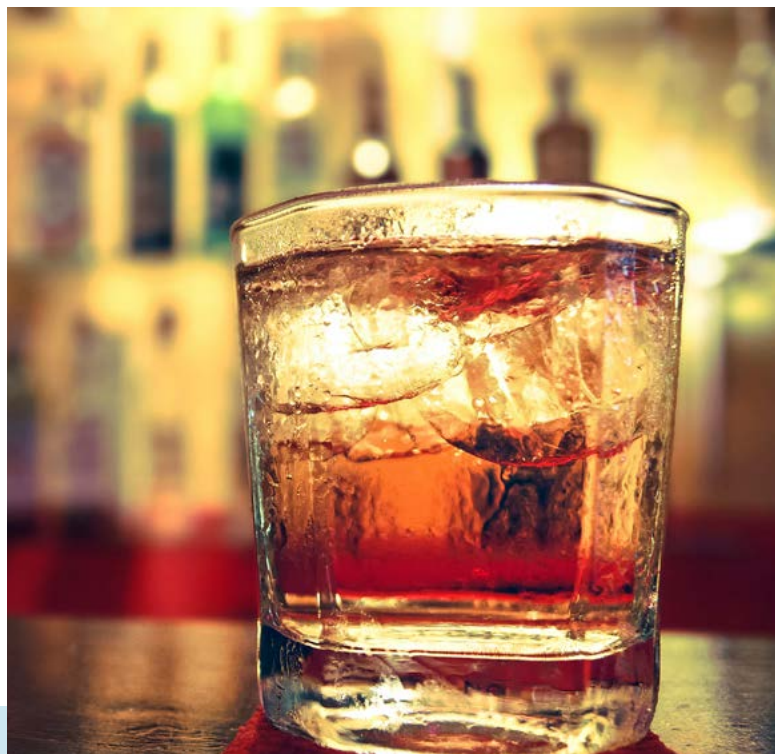
Alcohol is high in calories. Regular drinking can lead to weight gain. If you drink mixed drinks consider using diet drinks and water as your mixer. Sugary drinks are also high in calories. If you are a person who drinks, talk to your dietitian about how to fit the occasional drink into your meal plan.

## Alcohol and medications

It is important to discuss alcohol and medication with your provider or pharmacist. Let them know what medications you are taking and whether or not alcohol will be an issue with those medications.

### When to avoid alcohol:

- If you have high triglycerides
- If you have diabetes neuropathy (nerve problems)
- If you have diabetes retinopathy (eye problems)
- If you have diabetes kidney disease
- If you have problems with depression
- If you have problems with addiction



## More Information

For more information or if you have questions, contact:

**Diabetes Educator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Diabetes Program

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

**[www.anthc.org/diabetes](http://www.anthc.org/diabetes)**  
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