

DIABETES AND DRINKING

Before having an alcoholic beverage, a person with diabetes should ask three simple questions:

1. Is my blood glucose (sugar) under control?
2. Does my Doctor agree that I am free from health problems that alcohol could make worse?
3. Do I know how alcohol will affect my diabetes?

If the answer to all three questions is "Yes," then it's all right to have an occasional drink. The American Diabetes Association suggests that you have no more than two drinks that contain alcohol a day if you are a man, and no more than one drink a day if you are a woman. The reason is that alcohol is a toxin that your liver wants to quickly clear out of your body and your liver won't release glucose until it's finished working on the alcohol. The result is low blood sugar, also called hypoglycemia.

If you drink more than your liver can process over a period of time, the excess alcohol enters your blood stream and can make you feel very weak, dizzy, or sick. If you take insulin, or oral diabetes pills, the medication is also working to clear glucose from your blood, which is another potential cause of low blood sugar.

Like everyone else, people with diabetes can enjoy alcohol - again, the key is moderation. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind if at all you (BETTER TO AVOID ALWAYS) choose to drink:

- > Never drink alcohol on an empty stomach. Blood glucose levels are at their lowest levels overnight and drinking without eating may cause you to experience delayed low blood glucose during the night