

Drinking & Going Out

In a person with Type 1 diabetes, alcohol has two potentially problematic effects:

- ★ It impairs the liver's ability to produce glucose in the event of a severe hypo; and
- ★ Early signs of hypos can look the same as drunkenness (for you and people around you) or ignored.

When you have a hypo, under normal circumstances, in time the liver kicks in to secrete glucose and raise your blood sugar levels. This occurs way after you have had early signs of the hypo and hopefully been able to treat it. However, if you do not treat a hypo your liver will eventually kick in. If you have been drinking significant amounts of alcohol this life saving mechanism can be impaired and blood sugar levels will continue to fall indefinitely.

Something else to be aware of when drinking is that it can become very easy to ignore or misinterpret hypo warning symptoms. They can be similar to feeling tipsy, or you can just ignore them altogether as there are so many other things going on!

Keeping it safe

You may like to consider the following options:

- ★ Before a big night out, make sure you eat a decent meal.
- ★ Carry some hypo food on you.

- ★ If you're planning on being very active you may like to reduce your insulin by 10-20%.
- ★ Try to nibble on something with carbs and/or protein while you drink (chips, nuts, etc).
- ★ Wear or carry some form of identification; in the case that a hypo is mistaken for drunkenness this can be a lifesaver.
- ★ When you get home after a big night, try to do a blood test and eat or drink something like multigrain toast, a glass of milk, or a banana.
- ★ Make sure someone you are drinking with knows you have diabetes.
- ★ If you get stuck in shouts/rounds and are drinking faster than you would like, on your shout buy yourself a soft drink.

Other stuff

- ★ Alcohol is high in kilojoules/calories, so can contribute to weight gain.
- ★ Some types of alcohol are high in carbohydrates and can raise blood glucose levels, however they vary greatly, e.g. Carlton Cold has 9 g carbohydrate per 375mL, VB has 10.1g, Toohey's Blue 17.0g, Hahn Longbrew 5.0g.
- ★ 'Diet' beers contain less carbohydrate but the same amount of alcohol as regular beer.
- ★ Mixing spirits with regular sugary soft drinks, milk or juice is one way to consume carbohydrates while you drink if nothing else is available.