**Notes:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Diabetes Specialist Dietitian:**

**Contact number:**

**Hospital Site:**

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service

If you need general information or advice about Trust services, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 020 3594 2040 or visit www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals**.** Alternatively please contact staff who are providing your care if you require clinical advice.

## Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.

For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

## Tell us what you think

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**Switchboard:** 020 3416 5000
**www.bartshealth.nhs.uk**

Barts Health NHS Trust

Patient information

# Alcohol and Type 1 Diabetes

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Listed below is the average carbohydrate content of alcoholic drinks:

| **Type of Alcoholic drink** | **CHO content Per measure** | **Measure** |
|---|---|---|
| Red wine | trace | 150ml |
| Dry white wine | trace | 150ml |
| Sweet white wine | 7g | 125ml (small) |
| | 15g | 250ml (large) |
| Lager | 4g | 284ml (half pint) |
| | 8g | 568mls (pint) |
| Ale | 9g | 284ml (half pint) |
| | 17g | 568mls (pint) |
| Stout | 4g | 284mls (half pint) |
| | 17g | 568mls (pint) |
| Dry cider | 7g | 284mls (half pint) |
| Sweet cider | 12g | 284mls (half pint) |
| Vintage cider | 21g | 284mls (half pint) |
| Spirits | Nil | 25mls |
| Port | 6g | 50mls |
| Sherry | Trace | 50mls |
| Sweet sherry | 3.5g | 50mls |
| Vermouth | 8g | 50mls |
| Liqueur | 8g | 25mls |
| Alcopops e.g. WKD | 35g | 275ml bottle |

‘Diet’ and ‘Slimline’ mixers are carbohydrate free, so do not need to be counted. You do need to count the carbohydrate in soft drinks like full sugar cola, lemonade and juices.

## Persistent Hyperglycaemia with alcoholic drinks

Due to the risk of hypoglycaemia, it is not usually necessary to count the carbohydrate content of alcoholic drinks when calculating your insulin doses. What is more likely to affect your blood glucose is the food you are consuming, or taking extra exercise, such as dancing.

Some people find that they consistently get higher blood glucose readings after drinking alcohol. You may find giving an insulin bolus can help compensate for the carbohydrate content.

- Calculate the usual insulin for the carbohydrate for that meal
- Add on **half your calculated insulin** to account for the carbohydrate in the drink in addition to that in your food

Example

If you were to drink 3 pints of lager with a meal, that's an extra 24g carbohydrate.

If you normally give 1 unit of insulin per 10g carbohydrate; this would equate to an extra 2 units. Using **half your calculated insulin** this would mean giving 1 extra unit to account for the 3 pints of lager.

**Please take caution when giving insulin for carbohydrate in alcohol, as alcohol can cause hypoglycaemia**. **Only do so if you know the true effect of alcohol on your blood glucose levels.**

## What about diet beers?

Products such as Bud light®, Corona light®, Becks premier light™, Heineken premium light can be misleading because despite containing less calories and alcohol, they contain at least the same amounts of carbohydrate compared to the regular product.



## Alcohol

Alcohol is made from the fermentation of either sugar or starch. Pure alcohol e.g. spirits alone does not raise blood glucose but any remaining unfermented carbohydrate (CHO), added sugar or fruit can have an effect e.g. beer, cider However, if you have alcohol with Type 1 Diabetes this can increase the risk of hypoglycaemia, so additional care is required.

## What are the recommendations?

The government recommendations for people with Diabetes are similar to those for the general population and these are reviewed periodically. Currently the advice is for a maximum of:

- 14 units a week for both men and women,
- To be spread evenly over the week
- It is a good idea to have 2 drink free days a week

## How is alcohol measured?

Alcohol is measured in units. Drinks differ in their alcohol content so the standard volume served varies. For example,

One unit generally equates to:

½ pint beer, lager (3.5% vol)
1 small (125ml) glass of wine (9% vol) (N.B. most wine is 11-13%)
1 (25ml) measure of spirits (40% vol)

Alcohol content is described as % volume (alcohol by volume: ABV). To work out accurately the number of units you are having the following equation can be used:

$$\frac{\text{ABV} \times \text{volume}}{1000} = \text{number of units}$$

For example, by using the above equation we can calculate that a pint of lager (568 ml), which has the alcoholic strength of 5.2 % ABV, will contain 3 units.

$$\frac{5.2 \times 568}{1000} = 2.95 \text{ (i.e. 3 units)}$$

Although the standard units are listed above, different drinks contain different amounts of alcohol and glass sizes can vary. Often we are drinking more than we think. For further information visit NHS choices on www.nhs.uk or drink aware on www.drinkaware.co.uk



## Hypoglycaemia & Alcohol

Alcohol interferes with the liver's ability to process glucose. It can have the effect of lowering blood glucose levels (BGL's) and this can be a considerable length of time after consuming alcoholic drinks. Because of this, you are more at risk of experiencing hypoglycaemia (hypos) several hours later. There is an additional risk of hypos if you are also more active on occasions when drinking, for example; dancing/sex.

Therefore when drinking:

- Never drink on an empty stomach – this can increase your risk of having a hypo. Have a meal before you drink or eat carbohydrate containing snacks when drinking alcohol.
- Hypos can be mistaken for drunkenness – so it is important to carry ID or inform family or friends if drinking to excess so that they might watch out and be able to treat hypos adequately
- If you have been drinking during the evening and have been more active, have a carbohydrate snack before going to bed or make appropriate alterations (reduction) to your basal insulin to reduce the risk of having a hypo at night
- The greatest risk of hypoglycaemia after drinking during the evening can be before lunch the next day, so you may benefit from reducing your breakfast insulin dose
- The risk of hypoglycaemia can last up 16hrs after heavy drinking.