

Alcohol and Drugs for young people with Type 1 Diabetes

Alcohol consumption

It is against the law (in Australia) to drink alcohol if you are under 18 years of age.

Whatever your age, if you drink alcohol and you have diabetes then you need to know the following information:

- Alcohol, particularly sweet alcohol drinks, can **initially** raise blood glucose levels (BGLs) and later cause them to fall
- Alcohol may inhibit glucose release from the liver, increasing the risk of hypoglycaemia (having a hypo)
- Alcohol can also mask the early symptoms of hypoglycaemia
- Alcohol can lead to confusion, which may affect your ability to manage a hypo, and may cause you to forget to take your insulin
- Alcohol may cause your friends and others to mistake the signs of a severe hypo (reduced level of consciousness), assume you are drunk and leave you to “sleep it off”.

Tips on how to manage your diabetes

- Before you go out, have a meal which includes plenty of carbohydrate (carbs)
- Reduce your insulin dose by approximately 20%
- Don't drink too much and avoid 'binge' drinking
- Don't swap alcohol for food
- Drink slowly and take a break occasionally - have a non-alcohol drink or water in between alcoholic drinks
- Drink low-alcohol beers or wine rather than spirits
- Don't let anyone top up your drink
- Eat some carbs while you're drinking and before going to bed
- Take a BGL before going to bed
- Tell your parent, partner, flat mate or friend that you have been drinking – so they can check on you in the morning
- Always carry some 'hypo' food with you
- Wear or carry something to identify that you have type 1 diabetes to prevent a hypo being mistaken for you being drunk
- **Never** leave your drink unattended in case it gets 'spiked'.

Hangovers

If you are feeling sick or you are vomiting and can't eat, you still need insulin. Insulin must **never** be stopped. Make sure you know your 'sick day' plan.

If you want to go back to sleep after having your insulin, set an alarm (for example, on your mobile phone) so you will be woken in two hours to do another BGL.

If vomiting continues, see a doctor or go to the emergency department at your local hospital.

Remember: If you are 'hung over' and can't eat anything then you may need to take less insulin. However, **never** stop your insulin. Make sure you take your BGL's frequently so you know what's happening with your diabetes. Start your 'sick day' plan and check for ketones if your BGL is above 15 mmol/L.

Drug taking

Taking drugs, even if it is only occasionally, can affect you making decisions about your diabetes as well as increase your risk of developing mental health problems. Most recreation drugs alter mood, perception and thinking ability, which can lead you to forgetting to take your insulin or ignoring hypos. Some drugs make you feel like you don't want to eat which can lead to hypoglycaemia.

Marijuana is different as it may cause you to get the 'munchies' and really over-eat, causing high BGL's. It may also stop you from feeling 'sick' and stop you from vomiting, which can disguise the early symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). DKA can make you really sick, and in some cases can be life threatening. Remember to check your BGL and, if it is over 13 mmol/L, check for ketones.

This is your life and you need to make the right choices for you and not be pressured into anything that does not feel right. It's OK to say NO

Further information

For further information and advice on alcohol and drug consumption amongst young people visit the following websites:

<http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/NDSS-Content/Diabetes-Information-Sheets/Illicit-Drug-Use-and-Diabetes/>

<http://www.adf.org.au/>

[http://www.ndss.com.au/Documents/MyD/Drug%20Use%20and%20Type%201%20Diabetes.p
df](http://www.ndss.com.au/Documents/MyD/Drug%20Use%20and%20Type%201%20Diabetes.pdf)