

Diabetes and Alcohol

Drinking alcohol can be dangerous to your health. It makes it hard to make good decisions, drive safely, and feel sensations.

Get the real scoop:

During an appointment, Mary's doctor asks her if she ever drinks alcohol. Mary is unsure how to answer. Her friends recently asked her to join them at a party that will have alcohol before the school dance Saturday night. Her doctor gives her the facts on how alcohol and diabetes don't mix.

Alcohol can cause low blood sugars for hours after drinking. The doctor tells her she may even miss feeling the symptoms of low blood sugar, which can be dangerous because she won't know that she has to treat it. She learns that alcohol can make her forget to take her diabetes medicine, forget how much she has eaten, and forget to check blood sugars. In addition, alcohol may make her gain extra weight because it contains many calories. Mary realizes it's probably not worth drinking after all, but she will still join her friends at the party.

Drinking under the age of 21 is illegal. It is always a healthier and safer choice *NOT* to drink alcohol. If you choose to drink alcohol, here are tips to help you be safe:

- ▶ Don't drink on an empty stomach. It is best to drink alcohol with a meal to avoid low blood sugars.
- ▶ Always wear your Medic Alert bracelet or necklace.
- ▶ Have no more than 2 servings (one serving = 12 oz of beer, or 5 oz of wine, or 1 oz of hard liquor i.e. vodka, rum).
- ▶ Check blood sugars often after drinking.
- ▶ Make sure you stay with a friend who knows the signs and how to treat a low blood sugar.

Betschart, J., Thom, S. "In Control, A Guide for Teens with Diabetes". John Wiley & Sons Inc. New York, NY.

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