

Alcohol and Drugs

Information for Health Professionals

Alcohol Consumption

Underage drinking is not recommended for any teenager and should not be encouraged. However, it is important for teenagers with diabetes to be aware of how alcohol can impact on their diabetes management. They need to be aware of the following information:

- alcohol, particularly sweet alcohol drinks can **initially** raise blood glucose levels and later cause them to fall
- alcohol may inhibit glucose release from the liver, increasing the risk of a severe 'hypo'
- alcohol can mask the early symptoms of a hypoglycaemia
- alcohol can lead to confusion which may affect the ability to manage a 'hypo' and may cause insulin to be forgotten
- the effects of alcohol can lead to people mistaking the signs of a severe 'hypo' (reduced level of consciousness) with being drunk.

Tips for Young People with Diabetes when Consuming Alcohol

The following precautions need to be taken by the teenager if they are consuming alcohol:-

- drink in moderation
- avoid 'binge' drinking
- do not substitute alcohol for food
- monitor blood glucose levels regularly, particularly prior to bed
- do not drink alcohol to excess as this may cause vomiting
- drink low-alcohol beers or wine rather than spirits
- be encouraged to eat carbohydrate while consuming alcohol
- eat some carbohydrate before going to bed
- if nausea prevents eating, insulin must **never** be stopped, a 'Sick Day' plan should be commenced.

Alcohol and Sex

Alcohol impairs thinking and judgement and some young people are more likely to engage in unsafe sex when they have been drinking. Being drunk can increase the risk of being 'date' raped.

Hangovers

For hangovers the following advice should be given:

- Still have insulin even if they are feeling 'sick' or vomiting and can't eat. Insulin must **never** be stopped.
- Ensure they have a written 'Sick Day' Plan which can be used if to guide them if they are hung over
- Continue to monitor BGL's regularly. They need to set an alarm (on their mobile phone) in case they fall asleep so they will wake in a couple of hours to repeat the BGL
- Seek medical attention if vomiting continues.

Note: Even if 'hung over' and food can't be eaten then a reduced dose of insulin may be needed but **never** stopped. During this time blood glucose testing needs to be performed regularly and they should commence a 'Sick Day' plan.

Drug Taking

Drug taking, whether on an occasional or regular basis, is likely to impair a young person's decision making regarding their diabetes management.

The specific issues with drug taking in a teenager with diabetes are:

- most recreation drugs alter mood, perception and cognitive ability
- a decreased interest in routines e.g. injection taking and eating
- an increased risk of hypoglycaemia being ignored or misinterpreted
- reduced appetite which can lead to hypoglycaemia (except when using marijuana)

(adapted from the Clinical practice guidelines: Type 1 diabetes in children and adolescents, 2005)

In the case of marijuana, appetite can be increased (known as the 'munchies'). Marijuana has a powerful anti-emetic effect and may disguise symptoms of ketoacidosis (DKA) such as nausea and vomiting. This can result in the teenager presenting later with DKA which can be life threatening.

Education Requirements

Topic	Content
<i>Alcohol and Diabetes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• explain the effects of alcohol on the brain & liver• explain the impact alcohol has on diabetes control• explain the relationship between alcohol and hypoglycaemia• discuss strategies to minimise the impact of drinking alcohol on diabetes control specifically prevention of hypoglycaemia
<i>'Hangovers' & Diabetes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss strategies to manage diabetes if 'hung over'• discuss 'sick day' action plan
<i>Drug Taking & Diabetes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• explain the effects of casual drug taking on diabetes control• explain the long-term implications if taking drugs regularly

Reference/s

1. Stillman, J., Lang, E., et.al., (2003) *Paediatric and Adolescent Diabetes Education Manual, For Health Professionals*. Queensland Health, Queensland Government Publication
2. Clinical practice guidelines: Type 1 diabetes in children and adolescents. National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Government, March, 2005; 188-189.
3. 'Reality Check' website: www.realitycheck.org.au
4. Novo Nordisk, *Going Out / Staying Out*, Publication