

Alcohol and Drugs

Information for Young People

Alcohol Consumption

It is against the law to drink alcohol if you are under 18 years of age. If you are over 18 years and you drink alcohol and you have diabetes then you need to know the following information:

- alcohol, particularly sweet alcohol drinks can **initially** raise the blood glucose levels and later cause them to fall
- alcohol may inhibit glucose release from the liver, increasing the risk of a 'hypo'
- alcohol can mask the early symptoms of a 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) with being drunk and leave you to "sleep it off".

Tips on Preventing Problems with your Diabetes

- Before going out, have a meal which includes plenty of carbohydrate (carb's)
- 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
- Don't let anyone top up your drink
- If you are going to be doing a lot of activity like dancing you may need to take less insulin before you go out and before going to bed
- Drink low-alcohol beers or wine rather than spirits
- Eat some 'carb's' while you're drinking and before going to bed
- Take a BGL before going to bed
- Always carry some 'hypo' food with you
- Carry some identification in case a 'hypo' is mistaken for you being drunk
- **Never** leave your drink unattended in case it gets 'spiked'.

Alcohol and Sex

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

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 (on your mobile phone) so you will be woken in 2 hours to do another BGL.
- If vomiting continues, see a doctor or go to the emergency room at the local hospital.

Note: 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 'hypo's'. 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 be life threatening. Remember to check your BGL and if it is over 15 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.

References

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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