

Alcohol-free Beverages For The Holidays

DIABETES AND DRINKING



Does alcohol mix with your holiday plan? For people with diabetes, drinking alcohol is truly a balancing act. Recent research points to both health risks and health benefits, based on several factors.

One of the most important factors in determining alcohol consumption is body weight. For people with diabetes who maintain a healthy weight, the benefits of moderate drinking include reduced risks of cardiac disease and increased good HDL cholesterol. Dark beer and red wine contain plant-based flavonoids and other antioxidant compounds with health protective qualities.

However, people with diabetes who are overweight should avoid alcohol because of the excess calories. Alcohol also depresses metabolic function and stimulates appetite. Other possible consequences include physical or emotional deterioration. Alcohol increases the risks of hypoglycemia for up to 24 hours after drinking and has been shown to trigger high blood pressure and increase triglyceride levels. Affecting the central nervous system as a depressant, alcohol also increases the risk of seasonal sadness. If you get the "holiday blues," it is best to abstain from alcohol and try one of the following sensible alternatives:

Tomato Highball: Mix 1/2 cup tomato juice, 1 teaspoon lemon juice, and 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce. In an 8-ounce glass, pour the tomato mixture over ice, and fill with club soda.

Orange Rum Cooler: Pour diet orange soda over crushed ice in a tall glass. Add 1/2 teaspoon imitation rum flavoring and a dash of Angostura® aromatic bitters.

Cherry Brandy Swizzle: Pour diet cherry soda over ice in a tall glass. Add 1/2 teaspoon imitation brandy flavoring. Garnish with a maraschino cherry.

Rum-Cola Highball: Pour 1 teaspoon imitation rum flavoring and 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice over ice in an 8-ounce glass. Fill with chilled diet cola. Garnish with an orange slice.

IF YOU WANT THE REAL THING, HERE ARE A FEW IMPORTANT TIPS: Discuss drinking with your physician. Beware that symptoms of hypoglycemia can mimic intoxication. Know your portion sizes: one serving is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1 1/2 ounces of distilled spirits. Eat a snack with, or before, your drink. Check your blood glucose after drinking and before bedtime to prevent nighttime lows. Remember, whether or not you partake of alcohol, you can still enjoy socializing during the holidays. Bring your own beverage, and toast, "To your health!"