

## *Diabetes and Alcohol*

*By Kathy Patrick, RN, BSN, CDE, Diabetes Education*

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Most people enjoy a drink of alcohol, whether it is a glass of wine with dinner or champagne at a special occasion. Do you have to give that up if you have diabetes? The answer is no, if done in moderation and you have no other conditions where alcohol is not advised. According to the American Diabetes Association's nutrition recommendations, alcohol can be included into a meal plan provided the blood sugar is under good control.

### **A Two Drink Maximum**

Alcohol intake for people with diabetes is the same as the USDA has established for the general population. This means a maximum two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

One drink is defined as:

- 12 ounces of regular beer (150 calories)
- 5 ounces of wine (100 calories)
- 1.5 ounces of 80-proof spirits (100 calories)

One drink equals 2 fat exchanges, except regular beer which is also an additional carb.

If you are trying to lose weight, alcohol is not a wise choice. Alcohol quickly adds calories and should never be consumed without food for people with diabetes on diabetes medications and/or insulin.

### **The Dos and Don'ts of Alcohol Consumption**

- Drink alcohol only with food. When you drink, your liver stops making glucose (sugar) so that it can instead clear the alcohol. When that glucose production is shut down, hypoglycemia or low blood sugar becomes a risk.
- Mix liquor with water or diet soft drink.
- Avoid "sugary" mixed drinks, sweet wine, or cordials.
- The ADA also recommends that if you drink in the evening to check your blood sugar before bed to avoid a low blood sugar while you sleep.

### **When Drinking is Harmful**

According to the ADA, drinking alcohol is harmful if you have diabetes and the following conditions:

- Nerve damage to the arms or legs
- Diabetic eye disease
- High blood pressure
- High levels of triglycerides

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mmpc's *Dialogue on Diabetes* is a publication for our patients by our diabetes educators. For more information on how to manage your diabetes, please contact Kathleen Patrick, Certified Diabetes Educator, at (616) 974-4873.

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# ***Pharmacy Corner: New medicines for type 2 diabetes***

***by Karin M. Proos, PharmD, Director of Pharmacy***

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Recently, two new medicines became available to treat type 2 diabetes. Byetta (exenatide) injection came to market in 2005 followed by Januvia (sitagliptin) tablet in 2006. Both medicines work with hormones already in the body to help bring down high blood sugars.

Byetta (exenatide) – acts like a hormone already in the body; helping the pancreas make and release insulin when blood sugars are high. It also slows down the release of food through the stomach and intestines. By controlling how fast food travels, it controls how many carbohydrates (sugars) are put out into the blood. This reduces the chance of a big rush of carbohydrates and a high blood sugar reading right after a meal. Normal side effects include nausea, diarrhea and loss of appetite. Weight gain is unlikely. It may cause low blood sugar when used with medicines like Micronase (glyburide), Glucotrol (glipizide) or Amaryl (glimiperide).

Byetta comes in a pre-filled pen injector. It is injected into the stomach, upper leg or upper arm two times a day before morning and evening meals. Most people start on the 5 mcg dose and increase to the 10 mcg dose after one month. Once the pen is opened, it is stored at room temperature and is good for 30 days. It can be used with other diabetes medicines like Micronase (glyburide), Glucotrol (glipizide), Amaryl (glimiperide), Glucophage (metformin), Actos (pioglitazone) or Avandia (rosiglitazone). It has not been studied with insulin. It helps lower A1c by 0.5 to 1%.

Januvia (sitagliptin) – works to keep certain hormones (incretins) in the body for a longer period of time. These hormones help the pancreas make and release insulin when blood sugars are high. The hormones also keep the liver from making more glucose (sugar). Normal side effects include headache, congestion and sore throat. Weight gain is unlikely. It may cause low blood sugar when used with medicines like Micronase (glyburide), Glucotrol (glipizide) or Amaryl (glimiperide).

Januvia is a round tablet that can be taken with or without food. It comes in three strengths; 25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg. Most people take 100 mg once a day. A lower dose is recommended for people with kidney problems. It can be used with other diabetes medicines like Micronase (glyburide), Glucotrol (glipizide), Amaryl (glimiperide), Glucophage (metformin), Actos (pioglitazone) or Avandia (rosiglitazone). It has not been studied with insulin. It helps lower A1c by 0.5 to 0.8%.

Byetta and Januvia are two new medicines that treat type 2 diabetes. They can be used alone or with other diabetes medicines to get blood sugars under control. These medicines may not be right for everyone, especially people taking insulin. Also, many insurance companies restrict these drugs because they are new and expensive (\$175-225 per month). It is important to talk with your health care provider about what is best to treat your diabetes.