Alcohol and Type 1 Diabetes

Knowing the effects of alcohol in type 1 diabetes can keep you safe!

How does alcohol affect blood sugar?

Alcohol is eliminated from the body by the liver. Another job of one’s liver is to provide background blood sugar. When the liver is “clearing” alcohol, it is not able to replenish the body’s sugar, causing the blood sugar to go low.

Some things to bear in mind:

- When drinking alcohol, the feeling of low blood sugar can be masked by intoxication
- Low blood sugars can occur up to 24 hours after drinking alcohol
- Judgment can be affected

Safety Guidelines when using Alcohol

- Be with people who know about your diabetes & what to do if you may be having low blood sugar
- Wear your medical alert bracelet
- Pack your own snacks & fast acting carbohydrate for the party. Never drink on an empty stomach. Be sure to have your meter with you
- Do not replace food for alcohol
- Be cautious about hard alcohol that does not contain any carbohydrates
- Pace your drinks & avoid drinking excessively
- Do not omit your insulin, doing so could cause very high blood sugars or DKA
- Check your blood sugar & eat before sleeping

The next morning:

- Plan on waking up at about the same time as usual to check your blood sugar & eat
- You may need less insulin

Glucagon will not work while alcohol is in the body. Because of this, make sure that someone knows to call an ambulance if you pass out.