

What a 15 year-old should know about diabetes

WHAT'S THE STORY ON ALCOHOL?

It's against the law to drink if you are under 21 years of age. We know that alcohol is around, but remember, there are many teens and college students who choose not to drink. If you don't want to drink, you can still go to parties and have fun.

Alcohol, particularly sweet alcoholic drinks can initially raise blood glucose levels and later cause them to fall. Alcohol can inhibit glucose release from the liver, increasing the risk of a severe hypoglycemic episode.

Is there a safe way to drink alcohol?

- If you choose to drink, follow the recommendations for adults: one to two drinks with food over the course of an evening.
- NEVER give insulin for the carbohydrates in alcohol. You do need to give insulin for carbs found in "mixers" like regular soda and juice.
- Drink alcohol free liquids (e.g. water) in between to stay hydrated.
- Never drink and drive. Always have a designated driver.
- Always make (or open) your own drink- so you know what's in it. Don't let anyone "top off" your drink.
- Let your friends know you have diabetes. A low blood sugar can be mistaken for being drunk. Let them know you need to test your blood sugar and need fast acting carb immediately.
- If you are dancing, test throughout the night and have carb snacks with NO bolus.
- Always test before you go to bed. Don't correct a high blood sugar (because dancing and/ or alcohol may still make you go low later). If you are on the low side before bed, have a carb snack with no bolus.
- Set your alarm to test later in the night.

WHAT ABOUT DRUGS

Remember that drugs are illegal. Finding and buying drugs can be dangerous, and lead to legal problems.

Marijuana (active ingredient THC) is one of the more common drugs. Marijuana may be mixed with other drugs by dealers, so if you are buying marijuana you may not know what it has been mixed with.

Marijuana increases appetite, and in turn, blood sugar. It also causes short term memory loss, problems with concentration, perception, and coordination. It makes problem solving more difficult. When mixed with alcohol it can cause serious impairment.

Amphetamines, cocaine, psychedelics, opiates and heroin: These also alter judgment, perception, and raise blood sugars, along with other effects.

Smoking: Smoking cigarettes and diabetes is a dangerous mixture. Smoking decreases blood flow through the body, therefore increasing the change of getting long term complications like heart disease and amputation.

WHAT ABOUT PREGNANCY?

If a person has diabetes, the mother should see a doctor who specializes in diabetic pregnancies **before getting pregnant**. For pregnant women to have a healthy baby, it's best for the hemoglobin A1C to be 6.0%. This is because uncontrolled diabetes in the mother can lead to serious birth defects in the baby. In order to protect yourself from pregnancy, it's important to talk to your doctor about birth control.

WHAT ABOUT DRIVING?

If you intend to drive, you need to show that you are responsible behind the wheel. Hypoglycemia is the biggest threat when you drive because it can impair your judgment and slow your reaction time. When driving, you should:

- ALWAYS check your blood sugar before driving.
- Always have a source of fast-acting carbs and your meter within easy reach.
- Wear or carry visible diabetes identification when driving.