

Department of  
**NUTRITION & DIETETICS**

# Alcohol and Diabetes Mellitus



## What Happens When You Drink?

- 1) Normally, the liver releases glucose (sugar) to maintain your blood sugar above the minimal level ( $>4$  mmol/L).
- 2) When you drink alcohol, your liver focuses on breaking down alcohol to prevent damage to the other organs. As such, your liver is unable to release sugar at its usual rate and this results in hypoglycaemia.

## What are the Symptoms of Hypoglycaemia? (Low Blood Sugar, $<4$ mmol/L)



Cold/Sweat, Weakness/Fatigue, Shaking, Hunger, Dizziness  
If left untreated, hypoglycaemia may lead to loss of consciousness.  
Severe hypoglycaemia may lead to coma, and even death.

### Drinking alcohol increases the risk of hypoglycaemia.

Hypoglycaemia can occur while drinking and for many hours afterwards. The symptoms may be mistaken as being drunk, leading to dangerous consequences.

- ✓ Avoid alcohol if you have poorly controlled diabetes mellitus, high triglycerides, kidney disease and/or heart disease.
- ✓ Choose alcohol-free drinks that are lower in sugar and carbohydrates.



If your blood sugar levels are well controlled, please consider the following suggestions if you choose to drink alcohol.

- ✓ Drink in moderation. You should have at least 2 alcohol free days per week.
  - Women should have no more than 1 standard drink per day
  - Men should have no more than 2 standard drinks per day

## What is a standard drink?



**1 standard drink contains 10g alcohol**

- ✓ Do not drink on an empty stomach. You should eat food containing carbohydrate while drinking.
- ✓ Use sugar free soda/water to dilute your drink.
- ✓ Check your blood sugar often e.g. when you experience hypoglycaemia symptoms or before bed. Be mindful of potential hypoglycaemia at night. If it is  $<6$  mmol/L before bed, you should eat a snack (1 serve of carbohydrate) e.g. 1 piece of fruit, 1 slice of wholemeal bread or 3 pieces of wholemeal biscuits.
- ✓ Prepare hypoglycaemia treatments like sweets or fruit juice by the bedside to treat any hypoglycaemia.
- ✓ Ensure people around you know that you have diabetes and are aware of hypoglycaemia management so they can assist you if you experience any symptoms.

## Where can You get More Information?

To find a dietitian, please call 6357 8322 for appointment. You will need to obtain a referral from your doctor for a dietitian consultation.

### Clinics B2

TTSH Medical Centre, Level B2

### Contact:

6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



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