

## Can I drink alcohol if I take metformin?

### What you need to know about using alcohol when taking metformin to lower blood sugar.

Taking medicine can be a good way to control your blood sugar, along with healthy eating and exercise. But alcohol and some diabetes medicines, such as metformin, do not mix well.

#### How metformin works

Metformin is one of the most effective oral medications used to treat type 2 diabetes. It lowers blood sugar levels by lowering the amount of glucose your liver produces. It also makes your liver and muscles more sensitive to the action of insulin so they absorb more glucose.

Most people take this medicine one to three times a day with meals, and it is generally well-tolerated. People with kidney problems and certain other conditions may not be able to take metformin.

#### Alcohol and blood sugar

If you take metformin, you may have noticed this warning on the label: “Do not drink alcoholic beverages while taking this medication.” This is good advice.

Drinking alcohol can cause blood sugar to fall too fast in people with diabetes. Metformin also lowers blood sugar, so the combination of the two increases your risk of hypoglycemia or low blood sugar.

The combination of alcohol and metformin can also lead to a rare but serious complication called lactic acidosis. This is a buildup of lactic acid in the body that develops when cells burn glucose for energy without enough oxygen. It's more likely to occur in people who binge drink and take metformin.

#### Our recommendation

People with diabetes should limit alcohol (no more than one drink per day for women and two for men) and consume it with food. If you take metformin, you may want to avoid alcohol entirely because of the added risks.