

Alcohol and diabetes



Drinking above the UK low risk guidelines can increase your risk of type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is a long-term condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high.

The chances of developing diabetes may depend on a mix of your genes and your lifestyle.

Drinking above the [UK Chief Medical Officers' \(CMOs'\) low risk drinking guidelines](#) of no more than 14 units a week can increase your risk of type 2 diabetes. That's the equivalent of six pints of beer or 6 medium glasses of wine.¹

What are the differences between type 1 and type 2 diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes develops if the body can't produce enough insulin, because insulin-producing cells in the pancreas have been destroyed. People who have this type of diabetes are usually diagnosed before they're 40 and the causes remain largely unknown.

Type 2 diabetes develops when the body can still make some insulin, but not enough, or when the body becomes resistant to insulin. Type 2 diabetes can happen when people are overweight and inactive and may be influenced by genetic factors. The risk of developing type 2 diabetes also increases with age.



drinkaware at work

Three main ways drinking alcohol to excess can contribute to diabetes

1

Regular heavy drinking can reduce the body's sensitivity to insulin, which can trigger type 2 diabetes.

2

Diabetes is a common side effect of **chronic pancreatitis**, which may be caused by heavy drinking.²

3

Type 2 diabetes is often linked to being overweight and drinking alcohol can impact this. Alcoholic drinks often contain a lot of calories e.g. one pint of lager is roughly equivalent to a slice of pizza. To find out how many calories are in your drinks, check out our [unit/calorie calculator](#).



Common symptoms of type 2 diabetes.³

- Feeling particularly tired
- Blurred vision
- Feeling more thirsty than usual
- Going to the toilet to urinate more often than usual, especially at night
- Genital itching or frequent episodes of thrush
- Slow healing of cuts and wounds



Don't forget

If you have concerns about your health, or are worried you might be diabetic and want more advice relating to a diabetes diagnosis then you should contact your GP surgery. You can also find more information on the [NHS website](#).

Support is also available from the [Diabetes UK website](#).