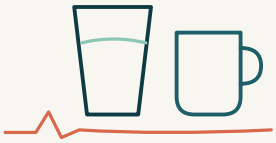
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Drinks, Alcohol & *Smart Swaps*

Sodas, juices, coffee drinks and alcohol: what they do to the curve and easy swaps; free US resources to cut down

GUIDE 09

EDITION 2026

Contents

01 Before you start

02 Sweet drinks and the curve

03 The smart-swap table

04 Alcohol, blood sugar and erections

05 Your drinks plan and free US resources

06 Sources

BEFORE YOU START

- This guide is educational. It is not medical advice and does not replace care from your own doctor.
- Erection problems can be an early sign of heart disease, diabetes or high blood pressure. Please book a checkup with your doctor.
- Get urgent care right away for chest pain, fainting, or an erection that lasts more than 4 hours.
- If you have heart disease or another health condition, ask your doctor before starting new exercise.
- **Diabetes medicines:** if you take medicine for diabetes (especially insulin or a sulfonylurea), changing how you eat, drink or move can cause **low blood sugar**. Alcohol can also lower blood sugar for hours. Talk with your doctor before you change your routine, and never change a dose yourself.
- If you drink heavily every day, **do not stop suddenly on your own** — withdrawal can be dangerous. Talk with a doctor first.
- Not for people with type 1 diabetes or an eating disorder unless their care team is involved. Never stop or change any medicine without your doctor.

CHAPTER 1

Sweet drinks and the curve

Sugar you drink acts faster than sugar you chew. A regular soda, a large bottle of juice or a blended coffee drink arrives in the gut as liquid, with no fiber or protein to slow it down. That is one reason sweet drinks tend to produce some of the sharpest rises in the **After-Meal Window** — and they are often added on top of a meal, not instead of one.

Research links regular sugar-sweetened drinks with a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, weight gain around the waist and heart disease. Health organizations in the US name them as one of the largest sources of added sugar in the American diet. Cutting back is one of the simplest changes in this whole program, because you do not need a new recipe — only a new default.

Juice and "healthy" drinks

One hundred percent fruit juice has vitamins, but it lacks most of the fruit's fiber and is easy to drink in large amounts. Sports drinks, sweet teas, energy drinks and flavored waters can carry as much sugar as soda. Read the "Added sugars" line on the Nutrition Facts label.

Whole fruit beats juice. An orange with breakfast gives you the taste, plus fiber that helps the curve rise more gently.

CHAPTER 2

The smart-swap table

Pick one row and make it your new default for a week. When it feels normal, pick another. Step-down swaps (half-sweet, then unsweetened) are fine — taste buds adjust over a few weeks.

EASY SWAPS FOR COMMON DRINKS

INSTEAD OF…	TRY…	STEP-DOWN IDEA
Regular soda	Sparkling water with lemon or lime	Mix half soda, half sparkling water first
Sweet iced tea	Unsweetened iced tea	Ask for "half sweet" for a week
Large blended coffee drink	Coffee or latte with milk, no syrup	Small size, one pump of syrup
Fruit juice at breakfast	Whole fruit + water	4 oz (120 ml) small glass, with food
Energy drink	Plain coffee or tea, plus a 5-minute walk	Sugar-free version while you taper
Sports drink at your desk	Water with cucumber or mint	Save sports drinks for long, sweaty outdoor work
Beer with every dinner	Non-alcoholic beer or sparkling water	Alcohol-free weekdays

About diet drinks. Drinks with no-calorie sweeteners do not raise blood sugar the way regular soda does. Many health groups see them as a reasonable stepping stone, while water stays the best everyday choice.

CHAPTER 3

Alcohol, blood sugar and erections

Alcohol works on the curve in two directions. Mixed drinks, sweet cocktails and many beers bring carbohydrate that can raise blood sugar. At the same time, alcohol makes the liver busy, so it releases less sugar into the blood — which, in people on insulin or sulfonylureas, can lead to **low blood sugar hours later**, even overnight. Drinking also tends to come with late snacking, broken sleep and skipped walks.

For erections, the picture is clear enough: in the short term, too much alcohol can make erections harder to get, and heavy drinking over time is linked with ED, high blood pressure and liver problems. Many men also notice that alcohol worsens sleep quality, which feeds back into a spikier next day.

WHAT COUNTS AS ONE DRINK IN THE US

DRINK	ONE STANDARD DRINK
Regular beer (about 5% alcohol)	12 oz (355 ml)
Wine (about 12% alcohol)	5 oz (150 ml)
Spirits (about 40% alcohol)	1.5 oz (45 ml)

US dietary guidance has long advised that adults who choose to drink limit intake to **2 drinks or fewer in a day for men**, and note that drinking less is better for health than drinking more. Some people should not drink at all — ask your doctor what fits you and your medicines.

- [ ] Eat a Plate-rule meal before or with any drink
- [ ] Alternate every alcoholic drink with a glass of water
- [ ] Choose lighter or non-alcoholic options; skip sugary mixers
- [ ] No alcohol in the 3 hours before bed
- [ ] If I take diabetes medicine: follow my care team's advice on alcohol and low blood sugar

CHAPTER 4

Your drinks plan and free US resources

WORKSHEET

ONE-WEEK DRINKS COUNT

DAY	SWEET DRINKS	ALCOHOLIC DRINKS	SWAP I MADE
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

My two swaps for next week:

My alcohol-free days:

Free help, by name

If cutting down feels harder than you expected, that is common, and help is free and confidential.

- **SAMHSA National Helpline — 1-800-662-4357.** Free, confidential treatment referral and information, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
- **NIAAA "Rethinking Drinking"** — a free National Institutes of Health resource with tools to check your drinking pattern.

- **1-800-QUIT-NOW** — the free national quitline (supported by the CDC) if you also want help to stop smoking or vaping. Smoking harms blood vessels too.
- **Your own doctor** — there are effective treatments for alcohol use, and a doctor can help you stop safely.

SOURCES

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans (current edition) — added sugars and alcohol
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) — standard drink sizes; Rethinking Drinking
- American Diabetes Association — alcohol and diabetes; Standards of Care
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — sugary drinks; tips from the national quitline
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) — National Helpline

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