

Alcohol and Weight Loss

1. Alcohol is metabolized differently than other foods and beverages. Under normal conditions, your body gets its energy from the calories in carbohydrates, fats and proteins that need to be slowly digested in the stomach—but not when alcohol is present. When alcohol is consumed, it gets special privileges and needs no digestion. The alcohol molecules diffuse through the stomach wall as soon as they arrive and can reach the brain and liver in minutes. This reaction is slightly slowed when there is also food in your system, but as soon as the mixed contents enter the small intestine, the alcohol grabs first place and is absorbed quickly. The alcohol then arrives at the liver for processing. The liver places all of its attention on the alcohol. Therefore, the carbohydrates (sugar) and dietary fats are just changed into body fat, waiting to be carried away for permanent fat storage in the body.

2. Alcohol is a diuretic, meaning that it causes water loss and dehydration. Along with this water loss you lose important minerals, such as magnesium, potassium, calcium and zinc. These minerals are vital to the maintenance of fluid balance, chemical reactions, and muscle contraction as well as relaxation.

3. Alcohol contains 7 calories per gram and offers NO nutritional value. In other words, in it only adds empty calories to your diet. Why not spend your calorie budget on something healthier?

4. Alcohol affects your body in negative ways. Drinking might help induce sleep, but the sleep you get isn't very deep. Ultimately, as a result, you get less rest. Alcohol can also increase the amount of acid that your stomach produces, causing your stomach lining to become inflamed. Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to serious health problems, including stomach ulcers, liver disease, and heart troubles.

5. Alcohol lowers your inhibitions, which is detrimental to your diet plans. Alcohol actually stimulates your appetite. While you might be full from a comparable amount of calories from food, several drinks might not fill you up. On top of that, research shows that if you drink before or during a meal, both your inhibitions and willpower are reduced. In this state, you are more likely to overeat—especially greasy and fried foods—which can add to your waistline. To avoid this, wait to order that drink until you're done with your meal.

Many foods that accompany drinking (peanuts, pretzels, chips) are salty, which can make you thirsty, encouraging you to drink even more. To avoid overdrinking, sip on a glass of water in between each alcoholic beverage.

6. Skipping a meal to save your calories for drinks later is a bad idea. Many drinkers know they'll be having some alcohol later, whether going to a bar, party, or just kicking back at home. Knowing that drinking entails extra calories, it may be tempting to "bank" some calories by skipping a meal or two. This is a bad move. If you come to the bar hungry, you are even more likely to munch on the snacks, and drinking later, eat a healthy meal first. You'll feel fuller, which will stop you from overdrinking. If you are worried about a looming night out with friends, include an extra 30 minutes of exercise to balance your calories—instead of skipping a meal.

7. What are more important, calories or carbs? You might think that drinking liquor is more diet-friendly because it has no carbohydrates, while both wine and beer do contain carbs. But dieters need to watch calories, and liquor only has a few calories less than beer or wine. Plus, it is often mixed with other drinks, adding even more empty calories. Hard liquor contains around 100 calories per shot, so adding a mixer increases calories even more. If you are going to mix liquor with anything, opt for a diet or club soda, instead of fruit juice or regular soda. Sweeter drinks, whether liquor or wine, tend to have more sugar, and therefore more calories. In that respect, dry wines usually have fewer calories than sweet wines.

The list below breaks down the number of calories in typical alcoholic drinks. Compare some of your favorites to make a good choice next time you decide to indulge in a serving of alcohol.

Drink	Serving Size	Calories	Drink	Serving Size	Calories
Red Wine	5 oz.	100	Martini	3 oz.	205
White Wine	5 oz.	100	Long Island Iced Tea	8 oz.	400
Champagne	5 oz.	130	Gin & Tonic	8 oz.	175
Light Beer	12 oz.	105	Rum & Soda	8 oz.	180
Regular Beer	12 oz.	140	Margarita	8 oz.	200
Dark beer	12oz.	170	Whiskey Sour	4 oz.	200
Cosmopolitan	3 oz.	165			

Diet-Friendly Alcohol Choices

Choose Wisely to Stay on Track

A key to any successful lifestyle change is moderation. While you may be sticking to a healthier eating plan on most days, certain occasions call for a bit of relaxation, oftentimes in the form of an alcoholic drink. While alcohol is fat-free and low in carbs, it's important to remember that it's the calories that count when it comes to weight management. As you know, alcohol and dieting don't mix well—your body processes alcohol first, leaving carbohydrates and fats to get stored as fat instead of getting used as fuel.

Even if you are careful about your alcohol consumption, all drinks are not created equal on the dieting scale and some choices are better than others. Here's a short guide to the calorie contents of different types of alcohol. Use it as a quick resource so you can make the best alcohol choices while sticking to your dietary goals.

Here is the Nutritional Information for some favorites:

Wine: The Most Diet-Friendly Choice---If you're going to drink, wine is the most calorie-friendly selection with a typical 20 calories per ounce.

Wine	Calories	Carbs	Per 5-oz. Serving
Chardonnay	20	0.4g	100 calories, 2g carbs
Pinot Grigio	20	0.4g	100 calories, 2g carbs
Zinfandel White Wine	20	0.4g	100 calories, 2g carbs
Caberbet Sauvignon	20	0.8g	100 calories, 4g carbs
Merlot Red Wine	20	0.8g	100 calories, 4g carbs

Hard Liquor: Easy on your Diet---Higher in calories per ounce than wine, and is often mixed with soda, which increases the calorie count. If you are going to drink liquor, use calorie-free mixers like diet soda or diet tonic water.

Hard Liquor	Calories	Carbs	Per 1.5 oz Serving
Vermouth	32	0.2g	64 calories, 0.4g carbs
Coconut Rum	51	5.3g	77 calories, 8g carbs
Beefeater Gin	65	0g	98 calories, 0g carbs
Rye Whiskey	69	0g	104 calories, 0g carbs
Schotch Whiskey	69	0g	104 calories, 0g carbs
White Rum	0	0g	104 calories, 0g carbs
Vodka	0	0g	104 calories, 0g carbs
Cognac	2	2g	104 calories, 3g carbs
Tequila	5.3	5.3g	104 calories, 8g carbs
Gilbey's Gin	0	0g	119 calories, 0 g carbs

Beer: Raise your Glass with care---next best choice for dieters with, about 150 calories per 12-ounce serving. Choosing light beers will drop caloric intake without sacrificing much flavor.

Beer	Calories	Carbs	Per 12-oz Serving
"Light" Beer	9	0.5g	108 calories, 6g carbs
Draft Beer	12	1.1g	144 calories, 13.2g carbs
Lager	14	1.1g	168 calories, 13.2g carbs
Ale	18	1.1g	216 calories, 13.2g carbs

Liqueur: Small BUT Potent---Sometimes the words "cordial" and "liqueur" are used interchangeably since both drinks are flavored, very sweet and often served as (or with) dessert. Liqueurs can be served alone, over ice, with coffee, or mixed with cream or other mixers. While tasty, if you budget your calories carefully, you can safely afford to have a drink or two on a special occasion. **BUT BEWARE**—drinking loosens your inhibitions and may make you eat without thinking.

Liqueur	Calories	Carbs	Per 1.5-oz Serving
Chocolate Liqueur	103	11g	155 Calories, 17g Carbs
Mint Liqueur	103	11g	155 Calories, 17g Carbs
Peppermint Liqueur	103	11g	155 Calories, 17g Carbs
Strawberry Liqueur	103	11g	155 Calories, 17g Carbs