

DRUGS AND DIABETES



Managing diabetes can be difficult to balance with a busy lifestyle or partying.

All drug use carries risk. We know that there are people who are diabetic who will choose to take drugs. So we want to highlight some things that can help you to **reduce the risk** if you do.

This information was written by **Dr Disorderly - PhD Neuroscience and Immunology**. We also collaborated with people who have diabetes (**type 1**) and experience of taking drugs.

This does not constitute medical advice and your experience may differ. You should consult your GP for specific advice about managing your diabetes. We can't accept any responsibility for the choices you might make after reading this information.



Eat a meal of long acting carbohydrates before going out.

These include:

bread, potatoes, high fibre cereal, oats

If you are going out for the day remember to eat regular meals - if food is missed there is a greater chance of a hypo (hypoglycaemic episode*)



Remember sugar is quick release - sugary cereals might not do the job!

*hypoglycaemic episode = low blood sugar levels

Spend at least 2 hrs researching
any drug you are planning to take

Try visiting some of these sites:

crew.scot
erowid.org
psychonautwiki.org
rollsafe.org
knowthescore.info

to find out more information
about the risks and effects of
different drugs

General harm reduction tips:

If possible, **test** the drug you are
planning to take

Take a small "**test dose**" and wait 2 hrs
to see if there are any unintended
effects

Avoid taking drugs when alone

Plan your **doses**

Tell people what you have taken, **how
much** and when you took it

Avoid mixing drugs

Seek **help** if you need it and be honest
about what you have taken



Alcohol may cause blood sugars to rise in the short term but will increase the risk of a hypo after the party



***Beer is full of sugar! This is the kind of alcohol to affect your glucose levels the most... as will sugary alcopops or caffeine blends**

Avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs. The combinations can be riskier and alcohol can affect your judgement of dose, risk and effects



Dancing for long periods of time can increase your chances of having a hypo

Ensure you have regular breaks, take time to check your levels and stay hydrated


If you are going to a rave or long festival, make sure you stock up on plenty of sugary drinks and fast acting carbohydrates to keep in your locker, bag, car or tent



It is vital to consume carbohydrates before falling asleep - even if you don't think you are hungry

Keep fast acting and slow release carbs by your bed just in case and remember that eating properly the next day is essential - you are still at risk of a hypo

hypoglycaemic episode = low blood sugar levels



*Your blood glucose should be no less than 10 mmol/l when you go to bed

Never miss insulin doses, however be extra careful with taking insulin at the end of the night or just before going to bed as you are already at risk of having a hypo from dancing/drinking


In this circumstance, many people with diabetes will take a reduced dose of insulin before consuming food and only take a correction dose if sugar levels are very high, in which case, they only take a small dose

Ensure that there is a glucagon kit in the house and that people know how/when to use it

Always carry glucose tablets when going out



Cannabis can affect blood pressure and blood sugar. Keep an eye on your levels and make sure you have some fast-acting carbohydrates nearby



Also be careful with the munchies - you don't want your sugars to get too high from eating lots of snacks!

Psychedelics and dissociatives

Set alarms to remind you to check your levels - have someone with you who stays sober and knows how to help you. Psychedelics may not have an effect on your blood sugar, but can affect your perceptions. Check your blood sugars at regular intervals and try not to miss meal times. If unable to eat, ensure easy access to sugary drinks (e.g. fruit juice)

Stimulants

Stimulants suppress your appetite so be sure to eat during and after the party when you need to, even if you don't feel hungry. Stimulants also affect hydration and awareness of hypo symptoms. If dancing, make sure you eat!

Depressants

Avoid eating sugar /carbs to combat lethargy while taking depressant drugs - it could just be the effects of these drugs. Drugs like valium/xanax and alcohol can affect your judgement and you might forget to take insulin. Again, set alarms to check your levels and avoid falling asleep without eating carbs. Be aware of taking depressants - it may be difficult for you to recognise the symptoms of a hypo or for others to realise you are experiencing a hypo

The effects of ketamine can mask the signs of a hypo and reduce your ability to treat yourself

If you choose to take ketamine it is essential to check your sugar levels first - especially if it is a big dose

Set alarms to remind you to check throughout the time you are taking it as the effects of ketamine could make you forget

It would be difficult to sense you are having a hypo if you are in a K-hole and difficult for your friends to realise and treat you



Opiates

Opiates can make your blood sugar levels drop rapidly - it is essential to have fast-acting carbs nearby and to monitor your levels closely. There is very little research on this topic but opiates are thought to have an impact on the usual function of the pancreas

Other

Caffeine, MDMA and cocaine can raise blood sugar levels by forcing more sugar into your blood stream at once and affect insulin levels in addition to interfering with sleep patterns.

With novel drugs like synthetic cannabinoids, psychedelics or opiates we can't be sure of the risks or interactions so research and caution is essential

Polydrug use

Taking different drugs at the same time always increases the risk of each drug. There is no guide on how this risk would increase for people with diabetes but it is important to remember that the more of a drug you take the riskier it is and negative effects are more likely with higher doses

It is easy for people to confuse a hypo with being **wasted**

Make sure that the people you are with know that you have diabetes, know the symptoms of a hypo and know what to do in an emergency

Wear a medical alert bracelet or carry a diabetes card in your purse or wallet

Avoid taking drugs when alone!



If you have a hypo, consume long-acting carbohydrates after treating with fast-acting carbohydrates to reduce the chance of another hypo

How to help your friend who is diabetic in an emergency situation

If a diabetic person is experiencing a hypo they may display a range of symptoms

hypoglycaemic episode = low blood sugar levels

- sweating
- trembling or shaking
- feeling irritable/change in behaviour
- confusion
- pale in colour
- hunger
- lack of concentration
- tiredness
- headache
- blurred sight

If you notice any of these symptoms, follow the advice on the next page. Always call 999 in an emergency



How to help your friend who is diabetic in an emergency situation



- 1) Sit them down (especially if they are in a confused state)
 - 2) Encourage them to consume fast-acting carbohydrates (e.g. sugary drink, fruit juice, glucose tablets, sweets.) They may refuse these but it is vital they consume them
 - 3) Get them to check their sugar levels
 - 4) Treat with fast-acting carbohydrates followed by long-acting carbohydrates (cereal bar, bread, pasta) to prevent another hypo from occurring
 - If the person is unable to swallow, use hypo-stop glucose gel and rub into their gums (diabetic people may carry this with them.) Once recovered, ensure they eat more fast and long-acting carbohydrates. If no access to gel, seek medical attention
 - If unconscious, administer glucagon kit (often kept in the fridge) and call for medical assistance. The glucagon kit will help to raise blood sugar levels in the short term however the person must then consume more carbohydrates as soon as possible
- IF THE PERSON IS UNABLE TO TREAT THEMSELVES, SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION**

NEVER ADMINISTER INSULIN

In most emergencies, diabetics need sugar. As insulin lowers blood sugar levels, this will only make the situation worse and could be life threatening

For more info



[CREW.SCOT](https://www.crew.scot)

[KNOWTHESCORE.INFO](https://www.knowthescore.info)

[PSYCHONAUTWIKI.ORG](https://www.psychonautwiki.org)

[RELEASE.ORG.UK](https://www.release.org.uk)

[SDF.ORG.UK](https://www.sdf.org.uk)

[SFAD.ORG.UK](https://www.sfad.org.uk)

[TRIPSIT.ME](https://www.tripsit.me)

[ROLLSAFE.ORG](https://www.rollsafe.org)

[NHSINFORM.SCOT/ILLNESSES-AND-CONDITIONS/DIABETES](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/diabetes)

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