

Alcohol



Why alcohol calories are more important than you think...

Successful weight loss is all about oxidizing (or burning), more calories than you eat. When they go on a diet, many people choose low-calorie alcoholic drinks, mainly because they contain fewer alcohol calories than their regular counterparts.

However, drinking too much has a far more damaging effect than you can predict simply by looking at the number of alcohol calories in a drink. Not only does it reduce the number of fat calories you burn, alcohol can increase your appetite and lower your testosterone levels for up to 24 hours after you finish drinking.

Alcohol calories

According to conventional wisdom, the infamous "beer belly" is caused by excess alcohol calories being stored as fat. Yet, less than five percent of the alcohol calories you drink are turned into fat. Rather, the main effect of alcohol is to reduce the amount of fat your body burns for energy.



In one study eight men were given two drinks of vodka and sugar-free lemonade separated by 30 minutes. Each drink contained just under 90 calories. Fat metabolism was measured before and after consumption of the drink. For several hours after drinking the vodka, whole body lipid oxidation (a measure of how much fat your body is burning) dropped by a massive 73%.

Rather than getting stored as fat, the main fate of alcohol is conversion into a substance called acetate. In fact, blood levels of acetate after drinking the vodka were 2.5 times higher than normal. And it appears this sharp rise in acetate puts the brakes on fat loss.

A car engine typically uses only one source of fuel. Your body, on the other hand, draws from a number of different energy sources, such as carbohydrate, fat, and protein. To a certain extent, the source of fuel your body uses is dictated by its *availability*. In other words, your body tends to use whatever you feed it. Consequently, when acetate levels rise, your body simply burns more acetate, and less fat. In essence, acetate pushes fat to the back of the queue.

To summarize here's what happens to fat metabolism after the odd drink or two.

- A small portion of the alcohol is converted into fat.
- Your liver then converts most of the alcohol into acetate.
- The acetate is then released into your bloodstream, and *replaces* fat as a source of fuel.

The way your body responds to alcohol is very similar to the way it deals with excess carbohydrate. Although carbohydrate can be converted directly into fat, one of the main effects of overfeeding with carbohydrate is that it simply replaces fat as a source of energy. That's why any type of diet, whether it's high-fat, high-protein, or high-carbohydrate, can lead to a gain in weight.

Appetite

The combination of alcohol and a high-calorie meal is especially fattening, mainly because alcohol acts as a potent appetizer. An aperitif (an alcoholic drink taken before a meal to increase the appetite) can increase calorie intake to a greater extent than a carbohydrate-based drink. In a Danish study a group of men was given a meal and allowed to eat as much as they wanted, they ate more when the meal was served with beer or wine rather than a soft drink.

Not only does too much alcohol put the brakes on fat loss, it's also one of the most effective ways to slash your testosterone levels. Just a single bout of heavy drinking raises levels of the muscle-wasting hormone cortisol and increases the breakdown of testosterone for up to 24 hours. The effect of alcohol on testosterone could be one reason that people who drink a lot carry less muscle.

So, what's the bottom line?

It's possible to lose weight and still enjoy a drink the key is moderation. Do not eat less food so you can drink regularly and lose weight. Alcohol metabolism uses up essential nutrients which are obtained in sufficient amounts from food!

Drink	Typical Kcal content
Beers, lager and cider per half pint (284ml)	
Bitter, canned and draught	91
Bitter, keg	88
Mild bitter, draught	71
Brown ale	80
Pale ale	91
Stout, bottled	105
Strong ale (barley wine type)	205
Lager (ordinary strength)	85
Sweet cider	110
Dry cider	95
Wines, small glass (125ml)	
Red wine	85
Rose wine, medium	89
Sweet white wine	118
Dry white wine	83
Medium white wine	94
Sparkling white wine	95
Fortified wine (50ml)	
Port	79
Sherry, dry	58

Sensible Alternatives

Swap	For
1 Shot/25ml Gin with 125ml Tonic Water = 93kcal	1 Shot/25ml Gin with 125ml Diet Tonic Water = 53kcal
1 Glass/120ml Dry White Wine = 77kcal	White Wine Spritzer ½ wine/ ½ soda = 38 kcal
1 Shot/25ml Barcardi with 125ml Coke = 104kcal	1 Shot/25ml Bacardi with 125ml Diet Coke = 52kcal
1 Pint/568ml Lager = 227kcal	1 Pint/568ml Shandy = 108kcal
1 Bottle/275ml Bacardi Breezer = 198kcal	1 Bottle/275ml Diet Bacardi Breezer= 96kcal

Calculate your average weekly intake of Alcohol.
Decide upon the amounts you would prefer to consume and write a strategy to assist you with this.