

## FAT LOSS AND ALCOHOL

On a recent flight I overheard a conversation that would make the alcohol industry proud. A woman was discussing the merits of ‘low carb beer’ over ‘regular beer’ and comparing beer calories with wine and hard liquor. This is a discussion I have heard many, many times and is a top question posed to me, right under “what is the best supplement can I take that will make me skinnier, faster?”

The woman loudly stated to several people around her that a serving of light beer only has 100 calories, and no carbohydrates, as opposed to carb-laden and calorie dense ‘regular beer’ – so that it is better and safer to drink the low carb light beer. The full discussion lasted about half an hour, and dovetailed into dieting, weight loss and which fast food items optimized weight loss. She was passionate and strong in her opinions, and finally I turned to look at her and observed her noshing a small bag of Oreo cookies, drinking a diet soda, with a Burger King bag on her airline tray table. I quickly lost interest and moved on with my attention. I don’t share my zeal for real food and health unless asked.

Just as there is no supplement that is going to get you healthily lean in a short period of time, there is no alcohol that is ‘better’ than the others.

You may assume that alcohol is fairly innocuous, that it is mere calories that have to be factored into your nutritional day. The market is flooded with ‘low-carb’ or ‘low calorie’ beers, wine coolers and other alcoholic beverages. Thinking that alcohol reacts as a simple caloric equation in your body belies the reality of how alcohol behaves in your system. It’s akin to considering the caloric ramifications of a Valium. It doesn’t

matter. Once you eat the Valium, it makes you groggy. It's a drug. Alcohol works the same way. It's a drug, not a food.

When you eat Valium, your body is not going to burn stored body fat for fuel. Same with alcohol. They are drugs. What drugs do is create a toxic environment that requires the full attention of your liver to clean out of your body. That is the primary job of your liver. The liver cannot metabolize stored body fat and clean out toxins at the same time. Alcohol also creates a large stress on the liver in that the chemical reaction in the bloodstream actually harms the liver – much like stabbing it with a knife. The liver has to recover from that and it can take anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks, depending on the health of your liver.

The reason the carbohydrate factor in alcohol does not matter is because the carbohydrates in alcohol are NOT food carbohydrates – they are not the same chemically or calorically as food carbohydrates. When you drink alcohol, you are ingesting a drug that will not allow your body to release body fat. Period. When you look at the reality of alcohol that way, does it make sense to fuss over the calories or the carbohydrate content? Not really. If you are going to indulge in alcohol, indulge in whichever form makes you happiest and then get back to healthy eating. Remove alcohol as a behavioral habit and keep it rare. When you are actively working on fat loss, it is best to eliminate it completely.

I used to work alcohol into some insistent peoples food plans once a week, to ease their resistance to giving up alcohol. What I found is that the lack of progress in their bodies was more frustrating than living without the alcohol. Even alcohol once a week

will hold up that entire week's worth of work. And nothing will put fat back on the body faster than increasing alcohol usage.

A good rule of thumb that I use with my clients is to insist on the elimination of alcohol completely within three weeks of beginning the GT process. Usually, that weaning process is very helpful. Once in a while, someone will find that they are 'not able' to give up alcohol. In that case, I recommend professional help.

\*\*\*WANT TO KNOW THE DETAILS? HERE THEY ARE:

When you drink alcohol, your liver converts it immediately from ethanol to acetate. The liver has to burn this acetate to protect the body. If the liver has to spend time detoxifying acetate, it cannot burn fat. In other words, when you drink alcohol, a small portion is converted to fat (because it is unusable carbohydrates – not food, remember?), the rest is converted to acetate, and the acetate is released into your bloodstream where it inflames your body while waiting for the liver to process it (putting the brakes on fat loss).