

# Don't let Easter ruin your Lenten habits

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For many people Lent is a time to take a step back, evaluate what is important and think about sacrifice. People of the Catholic faith refrain from eating meat on Fridays. In addition, Catholics and people of other Christian faiths also “give up” something such as eating high-calorie desserts or kicking a bad habit, such as smoking. According to Michael Koller, MD, an internal medicine physician at Loyola University Health System, Lent can play an important role in creating a healthy lifestyle.

“Lent is a great opportunity to get started on a track to better health. Since it’s only 40 days, that’s a goal people feel they can attain,” Koller said. “Since it’s Lent there will be lots of people around to support you and not tempt you to fall off track.”

Often people think of the start of the new year as the time to make resolutions for a healthier life, but according to Koller, Lent is a better time since it’s a focused 40-day period.

“Whenever making a lifestyle change, the first few weeks are always the hardest. The 40 days of Lent gives a reasonable timeframe to make and maintain a successful lifestyle change,” Koller said.

For instance, if you are already giving up meat for Lent, Koller suggests using it as a time to make healthier decisions such as eating baked or broiled seafood and staying away from fried or sautéed items.

Easter is coming, but Koller warns against using the celebratory holiday as an excuse to go back to old habits.

“Going back to your old ways when Easter comes around is one of the worst things you can do. You should celebrate but don’t slide back into old routines. Try to stick with moderation as you go beyond the Easter season,” Koller said.

He also encourages parishioners to keep their priests’ and ministers’ health in mind when considering bringing them an Easter gift.

“Think twice before bringing your priest or minister a high-calorie dessert as a gift. We need to have healthy priests and ministers and it’s hard for them to refuse a gift from a well-meaning parishioner. Bringing gifts is a wonderful idea, just try to make sure it’s a healthy gift,” Koller said.

Provided by Loyola Health University System

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