

Don't let food take control of your Valentine's Day

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Valentine's Day has turned into a day of indulgences. Whether swimming in the eyes of the one you love over a luscious dinner or drowning your loneliness in a box of chocolates, Valentine's Day can be a big road bump on your path to better health and fitness.

“[Valentine's Day](#) stirs up lots of emotions and anxiety,” said Cristina Harder, a registered, licensed dietitian. “But there are ways you can keep yourself in check and still make it through the holiday without ruining your healthy eating plan.”

Harder suggests a few ways to stay on track on Valentine's Day.

First, try not to make Valentine's Day about food or candy. Instead, focus on the people you love. Harder recommends spending time on activities to show how you care. Start by sending valentines to the loved ones in your life. You might also consider volunteering at a local animal shelter, food pantry or other local organization as a healthy way to share your caring spirit. “Focus on spending quality time with your friends and loved ones instead of food and candy. Trying a new activity together is a great way to share time with family and friends,” Harder said.

Cooking a meal at home instead of dining out can relieve the frustrations that come with crowded restaurants and save you money. It also allows you to control portion sizes and calories.

Finally, burn some extra calories by being active on Valentine's Day.

Regardless of your relationship status, physical activity releases mood-boosting endorphins, which will lighten your spirits. Whether enjoying a group fitness class or a workout on your own, adding physical activity to your Valentine's Day is the way to go.

In one hour a person can burn approximately:

- 200 calories walking, ballroom dancing or bowling
- 500 calories playing racquetball
- 600 calories playing tennis

However, sometimes the desire for conversation hearts and chocolates can be hard to resist.

“If you really want to enjoy Valentine's Day candy have smaller portions,” Harder said.

“The following only have 100 calories. They will satisfy a sweet tooth without killing a diet.”

- 5 Hershey's Kisses
- 30 plain M&Ms
- 3 Dove Dark Chocolate Hearts

“If you overindulge, just get back on track as soon as you can. A minor dietary mishap is only a bump in the road and should not derail your efforts,” Harder said.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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