

February 7 News Article

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Do you think ‘decadent chocolate’ or ‘creamy caramel’ when you think of Valentine’s Day? Getting that perfect sweet for your ‘sweetie’ traditionally speaks the love language, but does it speak well for your new healthy resolutions?

Maybe you don’t have to sacrifice those candy and sweet cravings that we all secretly love so well! Everyone knows that, compared to good foods such as fruits, candy just isn’t a healthy choice. But we don’t love candy because of its nutritional content – we love it because it’s yummy! Perhaps the best compromise is to know exactly what you are indulging in and then make the ‘less bad’ choice for your health. This is especially true when selecting candies for children and being a role model with less indulgent behaviors. As you browse the Valentine candy selections this week, consider these points to make the best choice:

**Keep an eye on Calories per serving** –if you have any weight goals (losing, that is!), then you know that calories per serving are your #1 concern. Don’t be deceived by the package – with candy it’s all about portion control! Many candy bars are now ‘super-sized’ with one bar providing at least two servings! You can easily consume 350-400 calories in one setting, eating all the contents in one king-size package. **A little taste of chocolate goes a long way** – consider small pieces of your beloved sweet! Instead of the larger bars, consider small portions such as a Hershey’s Kiss! Or try chocolate covered marshmallow selections – where the chocolate is only on the outside. Read your labels carefully to understand how many calories are in each piece – and how many pieces equal a serving. To get to most health from your candy craving, combine your favorite with a healthier choice. Favorites could include chocolate covered strawberries or chocolate oatmeal cookies!

**Watch the fat versus sugar content**– calories come from several sources. Fat provides 9 calories per gram while sugar provides 4 calories per gram. Saturated fat also contributes other unhealthy qualities when consumed too often in large quantities. For instance, a roll of Smarties has 6 grams of sugar, but no fat (0 grams of saturated fat)– with only 25 calories in a serving. Compare this to a serving of 9 Hershey’s

milk chocolate Kisses which has 21 grams of sugar, but also 13 total grams of fat (8 saturated fat) with 230 calories in a serving.

**Make Candy an occasional indulgence** – total avoidance of sweets may not be realistic, especially during a holiday such as Valentine’s Day! We love candy and sometimes a little taste of our favorite chocolate or creamy caramel is so satisfying. So enjoy small portions of the best choices but don’t let the craving get out of control. Model the behaviors of portion control and calorie watches per serving, especially with children. Teach them that candy is meant to be enjoyed as an occasional yummy reward for consistently choosing an overall balanced diet high in fruits, vegetables, and good grains!

For more information on specific calories found in individual candy choices, read your labels or visit [www.acaloriecounter.com/candy-chocolate.php](http://www.acaloriecounter.com/candy-chocolate.php). Contact your County Extension Agent at 270-237-3146.



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