UNC PHYSICIANS NETWORK
UNC HEALTH CARE
CAROLINA ADVANCED HEALTH

The DASH Eating Plan

The **DASH** eating plan follows heart healthy guidelines to limit saturated fat and cholesterol. It focuses on increasing intake of foods rich in nutrients that are expected to lower blood pressure, mainly minerals (like potassium, calcium, and magnesium), protein, and fiber.

The **DASH** eating plan calls for a certain number of servings daily from various food groups. The number of servings you require may vary, depending on your caloric need. When beginning the diet, start slowly and make gradual changes. Consider adopting a diet plan that allows 2,400 milligrams of salt per day (about 1 teaspoon) and then once your body has adjusted to the diet further lower your salt intake to 1,500 mg per day (about 2/3 teaspoon). These amounts include all salt consumed, including that in food products, used in cooking, and added at the table.

Here are some tips to get you started on the **DASH** diet:

- Add a serving of vegetables at lunch and at dinner.
- Add a serving of fruit to your meals or as a snack. Canned and dried fruits are easy to use.
- Use only half the butter, margarine, or salad dressing, and use low-fat or fat-free condiments.
- Drink low-fat or skim dairy products three times a day.
- Limit meat to six ounces a day. Try eating some vegetarian meals.
- Add more vegetables, rice, pasta, and dry beans to your diet.
- Instead of typical snacks (chips, etc.), eat unsalted pretzels or nuts, raisins, graham crackers, low-fat and fat-free yogurt and frozen yogurt; unsalted plain popcorn with no butter, and raw vegetables.
- Read food labels carefully to choose products that are lower in sodium.

Staying on the DASH Diet

The following is a list of food groups and suggested serving amounts for the **DASH** diet:

- **Grains:** 7-8 daily servings
- **Vegetables:** 4-5 daily servings
- **Fruits:** 4-5 daily servings
- **Low-fat or fat-free dairy products:** 2-3 daily servings
- **Meat, poultry and fish:** 2 or less daily servings
- **Nuts, seeds, and dry beans:** 4-5 servings per week
- **Fats and oils:** 2-3 daily servings
- **Sweets:** try to limit to less than 5 servings per week

How Much Is a Serving?

When you're trying to follow a healthy eating plan, it may help to know how much of a certain kind of food is considered a "serving." The following table offers some examples.

SERVING SIZES	
Food/amount	
1/2 cup cooked rice or pasta	8 oz. of milk
1 slice bread	1 teaspoon olive oil
1 cup raw vegetables or fruit	3 ounces cooked meat
1/2 cup cooked vegetables or fruit	3 ounces cooked meat