

Life on the Road Wellness

Being fit over the road can be a struggle for a lot of professional drivers. And remember, wellness is more than just being physically fit – it also includes mental wellness. Stress, grief, and lack of sleep can affect you just as much as your physical health. Whether you are concerned about your mental or physical wellness, these tips can help.



Staying Physically Fit

You may have a sedentary lifestyle, but you can stay physically fit if you think outside of the box

Your truck can be its own piece of exercise equipment

- One of the easiest ways to get in a cardio workout is to walk. While you're waiting to load or unload or parked at a truck stop, take a quick walk. Fun fact: 32 times around a truck equals a mile.
- Buy a jump rope. It's small and lightweight so you can store it in the truck.
- Potential loss of muscle is a valid concern. Weights are a great option, but if you don't have those, try lifting some canned goods or one-gallon containers.
- For strength training, you can use resistance bands to strengthen core muscle groups. Try looping it through the door handle on your truck and lifting your arms up and out. You can also stand on it and pull the straps over your head. Resistance bands are also incredibly portable.
- Using the side of the truck, you can do a modified push-up.
- For ab work, do some sit-ups before you even get out of bed.
- Be creative and use items that you have on hand for exercise.

Eating Healthy

How can you be a healthy eater when you're faced with multiple bad options like fast food, convenience stores, and gas stations?

- When you're on the road, eating fruits, vegetables, protein, and fiber can be difficult.
- Have healthier snack options available in your truck. Go to the store and buy foods that are good for you and last long.
 - Apples, oranges, and baby carrots will last a while.
 - Bananas and cucumbers will spoil in about a week.
- If you have a refrigerator, string cheese and greek yogurt are great options that have protein, which keeps you fuller longer.
- Also look for pre-packaged items that have a long shelf life.
 - Granola bars, almonds, applesauce, tuna packs, peanut butter, etc.
- Moderation is key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Keep healthier foods with you and you will be more likely to grab a healthy snack.

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Reducing Stress and Fatigue

As a driver, stress comes with the territory. How can you combat stress and fatigue to live a healthier lifestyle?

- The most important thing you can do to relieve stress is remember to breathe. When you are stressed, count to 10 while taking deep breaths.
- Listen to music or an audiobook that will calm you down.
- When you're not behind the wheel, try exercising. This will boost endorphins, which relieves stress.
- You can also try meditation. Find a quiet place to close your eyes and relax. This will calm your nerves and release stress.
- Fatigue can be overwhelming. If falling asleep is hard for you, try counting backwards, blocking the light, or getting a white noise machine.

Coping with Grief

As a driver, feelings of loneliness, grief, and isolation may show up more often and they may also be more extreme

- Symptoms of grief can come at any time and for any reason. They can be related to change, lack of social contact, and a number of other reasons.
- There are five stages of grief that can be experienced in any order:
 - Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance
- Symptoms can come and go and become more or less intense:
 - Anger, helplessness, anxiety, insomnia, social withdrawal, appetite loss
- It's important that you are able to recognize these symptoms. Find ways to connect with family more often – Facetime or Skype instead of just call.
- You may want to consider asking for professional help. Contact your Dispatcher or the Benefits department to talk about the Employee Assistance Program.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a breathing-related disorder that causes brief interruptions of breathing during sleep that can last 10 seconds or more

- Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) can happen 400 times a night.
- It affects 1 in 5 adults with 1 in 15 experiencing moderate to severe OSA.
 - Those who have moderate to severe OSA are 15 times more likely to be involved in a traffic accident.
- Could you be at risk? Risk factors include:
 - Family history, being overweight, large neck, over 40, smoking and alcohol use, having a recessed chin or large overbite.
- Also pay attention to the signs and symptoms:
 - Lack of energy, headaches in the morning, depression, snoring, nighttime gasping, excessive daytime sleepiness.
- You may want to seek medical treatment with a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine. This uses mild air pressure to keep the airways open.
- Drivers who are diagnosed with OSA will be issued a one-year medical certificate to ensure compliance with CPAP therapy.