

Health & Wellness I



Life on the road for the commercial driver can become an all-consuming lifestyle, even for short-haul drivers. Sadly, the lifestyle often includes a lack of care for one's own health.

On average, commercial drivers have more health problems and shorter life spans than people in other careers (FMCSA estimates the average life span of a commercial driver is only 61 years old. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), conducted a survey that found that 70% of long-haul commercial drivers are obese (BMI of 40% or higher) and more than 50% are smokers. It also found that commercial drivers are twice as likely to be diagnosed with diabetes, and many of them have high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

Many commercial drivers also tend to engage in little physical activity and get less than six hours of sleep, which is less than the average working adult. These health conditions can medically disqualify a driver and essentially take away their livelihoods.

However, by focusing on four areas of your life that all influence your general well-being, health issues can be drastically reduced, and health and wellness can be improved. These four areas are the focus of this, and the next *Shield*.

1) FOOD

If you've been driving for any length of time, you already know that having easy access to good, nutritious food on the road can be a challenge. Start by moderating how many sugary drinks (like sodas, sweetened coffees, and energy drinks) and simple sugars (like white bread and white rice) you consume and replace them with water and more complex carbohydrates (like whole wheat bread and brown rice). Eating more fiber, fruits, and vegetables will help, too, as they tend to be more filling and have fewer calories (plus important nutrients your body needs).

Avoid

processed meats and fatty foods (such as bacon and French fries) as much as possible, particularly those with saturated and trans-fats. Unsaturated fats, like those found in fish and avocados, are actually good, but these should only make up a small portion of your diet. Meal control is also very helpful; balance your portions of meat, vegetables, fruits, and starches appropriately. By doing this, you can start reducing your risk for (or the impact of) serious health conditions such as obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, blood pressure, and hypertension.

- **Keep Healthy Snacks** - Don't fill up your cab with candy bars, chips, and soda. Your job is not a permanent road trip. By keeping only healthy snacks within arm's reach, you'll only be able to eat healthy things. The last thing you want to do is pour empty calories into your body.
- **Eat at Least Three Meals** - Don't skip a meal. This could cause you to binge-eat on junk food later in the day, which makes it harder to keep weight off. Eating smaller quantities of healthy foods throughout the day will help reduce hunger, maintain metabolism, and promote weight loss. While some may eat more, nutritionist recommend at least three meals a day.

2) EXERCISE

After driving and working for hours, the last thing you may want to do is exercise, but it is essential to your health. Some think it's impossible to set up an exercise routine while on the road, but that's not the case.

There are plenty who have figured out ways to work out and stay healthy on the road. Some keep a fold-up bicycle in their trucks, some power walk around a truck stop (thirty-two laps around a tractor trailer is roughly one mile), some lift coolers, and some have even turned their trucks into makeshift gyms. Be creative & consistent with exercising.

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The Shield
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Quiz



Driver Name: _____ Date: _____
Please Print

Driver Signature: _____

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. What percent of commercial drivers have a BMI of 40% or higher?
 - a. 50%
 - b. 60%
 - c. 70%
 - d. 80%
2. It is better to consume _____ than _____.
 - a. Sodas than water
 - b. Saturated fat than trans fat
 - c. White bread than whole wheat bread
 - d. Fruit than candy bars
3. By eating healthier, drivers can reduce the risk of, or lessen the impact of:
 - a. Obesity & Diabetes
 - b. High cholesterol & blood pressure
 - c. Both a & b
 - d. None of the above
4. How many laps around a tractor trailer is roughly one mile?
 - a. 30 laps
 - b. 32 laps
 - c. 20 laps
 - d. 23 laps
5. It is important to be creative & consistent when implementing an exercise routine into a commercial driver lifestyle.
 - a. True
 - b. False

