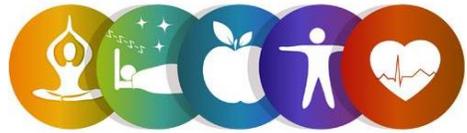


Health & Wellness II



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.

In the last *Shield*, we explored two of these four areas, food and exercise. This month we explore the next two – sleep and stress.

3) SLEEP

Sleep is incredibly important. The less consistent your sleep schedule, the harder it is on your body. In an ideal world, you'd go to bed and wake at the same time every day or night, and it would be good quality sleep, too. However, that is not the case for many commercial drivers.

Even if your driving schedule means switching from days to nights and back again, there are other things you can do to help promote quality sleep.

Start by cleaning up your sleep environment. Make it as pitch black as possible, a comfortable temperature, and turn your phone off (or at least suspend the notifications).

Be sure your sleep environment is quiet, or consider a white noise or meditation app to help you fall asleep quickly, and when you wake up, spend as much time as possible outside in the early morning sunshine. This will help your body reset its natural clock and help you feel more rested.

If you have tried all suggestions and are still struggling dramatically to get proper sleep, you may have a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea or insomnia. In such cases you may need to undergo a sleep study or consult your doctor to diagnose whether you may be suffering from any medical conditions, such as a thyroid problem, which can disrupt sleep in some people.

4) STRESS

Stress is a common health concern for commercial drivers. There's the stress of making your delivery on time, being stuck in traffic, and dealing with bad drivers on the road. However, stress can also be caused by lack of sleep, isolation, and other health concerns that you might be suffering from.

Stress can cause sleep deprivation, high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, and weight shifts, so it is important to manage and minimize your stress levels. To do so, maintain a healthy lifestyle of healthy eating and daily exercise and, when needed, use deep breathing exercises to help you calm down.

You may also consider avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine to reduce stress. Also, exercising reduces stress (and improves quality of sleep), and learn to rest if you are ill. Do not feel as though you must carry on regardless. A short spell of rest will enable the body to recover faster.

February, 2020
The Shield
Health & Wellness II
Quiz



Driver Name: _____ Date: _____
Please Print

Driver Signature: _____

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. According to FMCSA estimates, what is the average life span of a commercial driver?
 - a. 51 years old
 - b. 61 years old
 - c. 71 years old
 - d. 801 years old
2. More consistent sleep schedules lead to better health levels.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Cleaning up your sleep environment includes what?
 - a. Making it as pitch black as possible
 - b. Turning off your phone, or at least suspending notifications
 - c. Making sure your sleep environment is a comfortable temperature for sleeping
 - d. All of the above
4. Which of the following is not stated as causing stress?
 - a. Meditation
 - b. Lack of sleep
 - c. Physical health concerns
 - d. Isolation
5. To reduce stress, one can...
 - a. Avoid alcohol
 - b. Avoid caffeine
 - c. Avoid nicotine
 - d. All of the above

