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In this time of the COVID-19 crisis, it's more important than ever to stay as healthy as possible. It's one of the most important things everyone can do – besides social distancing. Why? It's a known fact that those who are less healthy are more apt to contract the virus and when they do, the symptoms are often more severe. In this e-book, we're going to talk about ways that truck drivers can maximize their health – especially those very important drivers who are delivering **essential supplies** to the public.



What are those essential supplies and how are drivers delivering them being affected – especially by the new Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) regulations? Parts 390 through 399 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) provides regulatory relief for commercial motor vehicle operations providing direct assistance in support of emergency relief efforts related to the COVID-19 outbreaks, including transportation to meet immediate needs for:

- medical supplies and equipment related to the testing, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19;
- supplies and equipment necessary for community safety, sanitation, and prevention of community transmission of COVID-19 such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, soap and disinfectants;
- food, paper products and other groceries for emergency restocking of distribution centers or stores;
- immediate precursor raw materials-such as paper, plastic or alcohol-that are required and to be used for the manufacture of items in categories (1), (2) or (3);
- fuel;
- equipment, supplies and persons necessary to establish and manage temporary housing, quarantine, and isolation facilities related to COVID-19;
- persons designated by Federal, State or local authorities for medical, isolation, or quarantine purposes; and
- persons necessary to provide other medical or emergency services, the supply of which may be affected by the COVID-19 response.

This regulatory relief is necessary to keep essential supplies flowing. However, this change also puts additional stress on the truck driver's already stressful job. Fortunately, there are avenues for an overly fatigued driver to raise his/her hand:

If the “driver informs the motor carrier that he or she needs immediate rest, the driver must be permitted at least 10 consecutive hours off duty before the driver is required to return to the motor carrier's terminal or the driver's normal reporting location. Once the driver has returned to the terminal or the driver's normal reporting location, the driver must be relieved of all duty and responsibilities and must receive a minimum of 10 hours off duty if transporting property, and 8 hours if transporting passengers.”

But you and I both know that no one wants to be the first to cry “uncle” especially when there’s a mission critical job to be done. So how often will drivers self-identify as too fatigued to continue? And if they don’t, the consequences are often severe.

Fatigue is the body’s response to lack of sleep or extensive physical or mental exertion. The more sleep someone loses, or the more they exert themselves in physically or mentally strenuous activities, the more fatigued they become. The only way to recover from fatigue is to get sufficient rest.

Getting enough rest isn’t always easy, especially for truck drivers. Fatigue can have long- and short-term effects on the brain, resulting in impairment of thinking processes. Some studies have shown that not getting at least 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep has the same sedative effect as drinking 10-11 beers and that being awake for 17 hours with no rest compares to having a blood alcohol level of 0.05%.

Fatigue negatively effects drivers safety by affecting short-term memory loss, attention and concentration. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates “in 2017, drowsy driving was a factor in 91,000 police-reported motor vehicle crashes which resulted in approximately 50,000 injuries and 800 fatalities.” Unfortunately, experts agree that the actual numbers are much higher.

To minimize the effects of fatigue, as is often said: “The best defense is a good offense.” It’s up to employers, communities, and drivers to combat driver

fatigue with a multifaceted approach. So how can truck drivers minimize fatigue?

There's no single quick answer...it's a combination of things. Subsequent chapters in this e-book will address: dietary habits and fluid intake, dietary supplements, exercise, sleep and stress management. And we'll do this in a way that hopefully relates to the busy driver. We also include some resources at the end that we used to prepare this information and that can provide additional detail if you are interested.

Our hope is that this e-book will be a resource to you – not only in this time of crises but in the months and years to come. Crises may come and go but good health habits can last a lifetime.



A

At first glance it seems too simplistic. Can eating the right foods really affect your fatigue? The answer is a resounding “Yes!” Eating the **right** food is essential not

just to your overall health but to your energy level as well. If you eat too much of the **wrong** foods, on the other hand, you'll fatigue much more quickly.

What's right vs. wrong? To maximize your energy and minimize fatigue, it's important to avoid sugary foods that cause a blood sugar spike, resulting in the inevitable crash and low energy and sleepiness. Natural energy foods are high in protein and fat content and low in sugar - which means they are absorbed slowly by the body and give you longer-lasting energy.

Many assume that it's impossible to get the "right foods" at a truck stop. But actually, there are some more healthy options. See the below list from JB Hunt.

- **Fruits and veggies.** The original "convenience" food. Fruits such as apples, bananas and oranges are usually readily available at truck stops. Many locations carry pre-packaged, single servings of fruits such as grapes, pineapple and watermelon, and veggies such as broccoli, carrots and cauliflower. However, avoid sugary dips or dressings that add extra calories.
- **Nuts.** Nuts are a great way to add protein to your diet and are a better alternative if you crave crunchy snacks such as potato chips. They also contain monounsaturated fats which can help lower cholesterol. A common pitfall people make when snacking on nuts is selecting honey-roasted or salted varieties. These add extra calories and sodium which work against nutritional and other health goals.
- **Sunflower, Pumpkin and Chia Seeds.** *Sunflower seeds contain high levels of vitamin E, which serves as an anti-inflammatory, and can help offset the effects of arthritis. Studies have shown that pumpkin seeds may help improve insulin regulation and prevent complications from diabetes. Chia seeds absorb water and expand up to ten times their size, helping you feel full. But be careful to follow serving size recommendations on these products – they are full of fiber.*
- **Yogurt.** Yogurt can have many health benefits as long as you avoid a common misstep made by most yogurt-eaters. Rather than choosing fruit-flavored yogurt which adds extra sugar and artificial flavors, opt for low- or non-fat plain yogurt. It's a good source of vitamin B-12, which may help prevent symptoms of depression. If you need some extra flavor, try adding fresh berries or granola (see below).
- **Oatmeal.** Oatmeal has a number of potential health benefits including lowering the risk of heart disease, lowering cholesterol, lowering blood pressure, aiding in weight loss, and being nutrient-rich with several vitamins and minerals. You can also boost the benefits of eating oatmeal by

mixing in fresh fruit or spices such as cinnamon or ginger, as well as the above-mentioned seeds.

- **Granola.** Another example of a healthy food with a common mistake. People often substitute granola for a bowl of cereal, but the recommended serving size of granola is one-fourth to one-third of a cup. Keep in mind the difference in the serving size to avoid lots of extra calories creeping into your diet. Also, granola bars often contain extra sugar and fillers that can add to the calorie count. Check nutrition information on the label to avoid varieties that can sabotage your good dietary intentions.
- **Pretzels.** *If your downfall is salty snacks, pretzels may be a good alternative to foods like potato chips or pork rinds. Although lower in calories and saturated fats, pretzels can be extremely high in sodium due to their saltiness. Opting for unsalted pretzels can reduce the chance of introducing too much salt.*
- **Hummus.** *The main ingredient in hummus, chickpeas (AKA garbanzo beans), is a great source of protein, fiber and antioxidants – all of which offer numerous health benefits. An added bonus to eating hummus is that it is typically gluten-free, dairy-free and nut-free. If you have any of these common food allergies, hummus could be your go-to snacking option. Hummus is available in several flavors and can be a great combination with veggies and pretzels.*
- **Beef jerky.** *Yes, you read that right...beef jerky. BUT not all beef jerky is created equal. Many brands are filled with MSG and sugar – check nutrition labels and avoid those. The good news is that several new brands are being made from all-natural, grass-fed beef. This means that the beef used to make the jerky is free of hormones and is MSG-free. When made from natural ingredients, beef jerky can be a good source of protein and contain as much heart-healthy omega-3s as fish.*

- **Popcorn.** *Popcorn is healthy? You bet! So long as you avoid those unhealthy “extras.” You know, the extra butter, cheese, caramel and other flavored toppings that tack on lots of calories, fats and oils. Also, popcorn is high in antioxidants called polyphenols which help prevent degenerative diseases such as osteoporosis, cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.*

Not only is your diet an important fatigue fighter, what you drink can impact your fatigue as well. Especially, if you start to feel tired around the same time each day, it could be due to dehydration. Dehydration is a common cause of fatigue and headaches. Our bodies are mainly composed of water. Dehydration affects metabolism, leading to a sluggish and tired feeling. Next time you feel an afternoon slump coming on, choose water instead of coffee and see how your energy improves.

Experts advise you to drink half of your body weight in ounces of water each day. And if you exercise often, you'll also need some electrolyte replenishment—these include essential minerals like sodium, potassium and calcium. Coconut water is a great source of these electrolytes and can help minimize fatigue.

But remembering to drink water can be a challenge, especially when you're concentrating on traffic, directions, and making your delivery date. Did you know that there's technology that can help? Enter smart water bottles! Yes, you heard me right. Smart phones, smart water bottles. These bottles monitor your water intake and remind you either through glowing, a sound and/or a connection to an app on your phone. Check out the link in resources below to read a review of several different makes and models of smart bottles.

D

Despite our best efforts to eat well, nutritional deficiencies can persist. They may cause you to feel sluggish and have difficulty focusing. And in driving, focusing is

key. If you aren't getting enough nutrients from your regular diet, you can take supplements to increase your energy and minimize fatigue.

Unfortunately, the first “supplement” most drivers reach for is an energy drink. The Harvard School of Public health explains that this is a really poor choice for long term good health. Energy drinks have been linked to increasing risk-seeking behaviors, poor mental health, adverse effects on the heart and blood vessels, kidneys, and teeth problems. And the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate these energy drinks. Many have a whole lot more caffeine and sugar than is healthy.

- **Excessive caffeine.** Too much caffeine from any drink, particularly when you drink several of them in one day, can lead to feeling anxious, trouble sleeping, heart problems like irregular heartbeat and high blood pressure, and in rare cases seizures or cardiac arrest. Some energy drinks may contain as much as 500 mg per can - the same amount as you would find in 14 cans of cola.
- **High sugar content.** Because of the excessive sugar content in many energy drinks, they carry the same health risks associated with other sugar-sweetened drinks. If you drink just one of these every day, and do not cut back on calories from the other food you eat, you could gain up to 5 pounds in a year. In addition to weight gain, drinking these sugar-loaded beverages regularly can increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases. Not to mention that a higher consumption of sugary beverages has been linked with an increased risk of premature death.
- **Lack of regulation.** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate energy drinks but enforces a caffeine limit of 71 mg per 12 ounces of soda. However, energy drink manufacturers may choose to classify their product as a supplement to sidestep the caffeine limit.

Instead focus on true vitamin supplements that complement a healthy diet and will help with fatigue in the long run. A common supplement taken to help boost energy and mental clarity is B complex—a group of eight B vitamins. Known as the “energy vitamins”, B vitamins are vital for converting food into usable energy. Nutrition from B vitamins ensures the proper functioning of several body systems, including the circulatory and nervous systems. B vitamins can only

be obtained through food sources such as meat, fish and eggs or by taking supplements.

Other supplements that may boost energy levels include iron, zinc and magnesium. Though dietary supplements aren't a substitute for food-based nutrition, they can be beneficial for people who notice a difference in their energy levels when taking them.

- **Vitamin B12.** One particular vitamin, vitamin B12 is essential in transforming the food you eat into energy that your cells can use. It also keeps your body's nerves and blood cells healthy and helps prevent a type of anemia that can make you weak and tired. Like several of the other B vitamins, Vitamin B12 is found naturally in a variety of animal proteins, such as meat, fish and dairy products. Many foods are also fortified with B12, allowing most Americans to meet their vitamin B12 needs by consuming a balanced diet.



Nevertheless, some of you may be at risk of a B12 deficiency, which occurs when your body does not get enough or is unable to absorb the amount you need. As a result, some people's energy levels may receive a boost with B12 supplements.

People who may be at risk of Vitamin B12 deficiency include:

- ✓ **Older adults:** Approximately 10–30% of adults over the age of 50 have difficulty absorbing vitamin B12 from food. This is because they produce less stomach acid and proteins, which are required for absorption of this critical vitamin.
- ✓ **Vegans and Vegetarians:** are at risk of B12 deficiency since animal foods are the only natural food source of this vitamin.

- ✓ **Intestinal disorders:** Conditions that affect the intestinal tract, such as celiac disease and Crohn's disease, may interfere with the body's ability to absorb B12.

However, there is no evidence that suggests supplementing with B12 — or any of the B vitamins, for that matter — can boost energy in people who already have adequate levels. There are two options to see where you are with Vitamin B12 – have your blood levels tested or take B12 and see if you can feel a difference in your energy.

- **Iron.** The body needs iron to transport oxygen from your lungs to the organs and tissues throughout your body. Without adequate levels of iron, your red blood cells cannot effectively carry oxygen to the body's tissues. This results in iron deficiency anemia, which may leave you feeling fatigued and weak.

Causes of iron deficiency anemia include:

- ✓ **Iron-poor diet:** The richest sources of iron in the diet include meat and seafood. For this reason, iron requirements for vegans are 1.8 times higher than for people who eat meat.
- ✓ **Blood loss:** More than half of your body iron is in your blood. Therefore, blood loss through heavy menstrual periods or internal bleeding can dramatically deplete levels.
- ✓ **Pregnancy:** Pregnant women require twice as much iron to support normal fetal growth. Unfortunately, about half of all pregnant women develop iron deficiency anemia.

In these cases, an iron supplement may be needed to correct a deficiency and avoid complications associated with iron deficiency anemia, including fatigue. However, because there are health risks from excessive iron intake, consult with your doctor to see if iron supplements are right for you.

These natural energy boosters are also long-term solutions for improved overall health. The more you take care of your body, the more energy you will feel.

Remember, if you suspect you have an undiagnosed medical condition that might be contributing to your fatigue, then it's best to see a doctor.





A

s a busy driver, you may be thinking: “I don’t have time to exercise. OR “I’m too tired by the end of the day to exercise.” But physical activity is critical for keeping up energy levels because it boosts circulation and improves heart

health. Active bodies sleep more soundly because exercise helps with stress-management. And we all know that truck driving is a very stressful job.

I also understand that it depends a lot on the load, the distance and when the load is due. FMCSA requires that if you plan to drive 11 hours in a day, you have to do it within a 14-hour window. Frequently, you don't have time to take as many breaks as you need. Weather and traffic create unpredictability for your daily schedule, some drivers will try to get as much of a long load behind them as they can, early on in the trip. A 9-10-hour trip with a load that's due next day, may allow more time for breaks. But for a 2000-mile load due 4 days from now, some drivers will try to get 11 hours the first day, stopping only 2-3 times total.

Despite these constraints, it's what you do during your breaks that count. Do you sit and smoke or do you exercise? The choice is a hard one, especially for long time smokers. But the bottom line is – how long do you want to be able to work? Do you want to have a healthy retirement when you finally get there? Or do you want to be so broken down and sick that you can't even enjoy your later years? Do you want to see your kids graduate, marry and have children? Do you want to be able to play with your grandchildren? All these things depend on how you treat your body NOW.

The following links are just a few of many that you will find online if you google “exercises for truck drivers.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKMC63ysO9w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObKR7ssE2MI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQaqmojPOW0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgy2DkG1Uwo>

Some exercises can be done in your cabin: pushups, planks, dips, and curl-ups. Shoulder, arm and hand/wrist stretches can be done from your seat. Other exercises can be done in an empty trailer or outside the trailer if you have full load or drive a flatbed. If you want to get more ambitious, you can carry some minimal exercise equipment with you: dumbbells, kettle balls, exercise bands, TRX bands, a folding bicycle. Just make sure you know how to use all exercise equipment safely before you start. Just remember these principles:

- If you have other medical problems, check with your doctor before you begin an exercise program, just to make sure it's safe for you to begin.
- Do some low-level activities – like marching in place or arm motions without weights - to warm up your muscles before you start intense exercises.
- Stretch after you warm up but before you start intense exercises.
- Maintain a neutral spine and solid core while you do all exercises.
- Make sure you have the wrist strength to control the weight you use and maintain the wrists in neutral throughout.
- Try not to hold your breath during exercise. It automatically raises your blood pressure. Breath in and out rhythmically with each exercise.
- There's a difference between a muscle working hard and pain. If you feel pain on an exercise, stop immediately.
- If you've previously injured a part of your body, keep that in mind as you do your exercises. You may have to make modifications. Or you may

want to consult with a physical therapist who can direct your exercise program.

Something simple that can reduce slips, trips and falls after driving for long periods of time is to stretch your legs – before you exit the cab. Open the door and swivel around in your seat, stretch your legs out straight and reach toward your toes. Circle your ankles. Bend your knees up to your chest. All movements will get blood flowing into your muscles and joints and wake up your joints in preparation for getting out and walking around.

In addition, if you exercise outside, the fresh air can do amazing things for you. Research has shown that increased outdoor exposure improves concentration and focus – which you need when you drive. Additionally, being in sunlight has benefits for improved memory and elevated mood, making you less likely to feel the effects of fatigue.

If you're suffering from an energy drop, spending even five minutes outdoors can help stimulate your circulation and give you the jolt of energy you need to regain focus. Rather than sit inside the truck stop – after all you've been sitting for how many hours - head outdoors during your breaks. It can help reinvigorate your body and wake up your mind.



The outdoors also:

Encourages you to exercise. Getting outside makes you more likely to exercise – especially of the cardio kind like walking or jogging. The push of the wind and the uneven ground can help you vary your workout and burn more calories. Just watch your step so that you don't twist an ankle.

Provides a natural source of Vitamin D. Vitamin D helps keep your bones, blood cells, and immune system healthy. It also helps your body absorb more of

certain minerals, like calcium and phosphorus. Your body needs sunlight to make Vitamin D. Just getting anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes of direct sunlight, 2 to 3 times a week, in the summer, will give you all the Vitamin D you need. In the winter, you might need a little longer exposure.

Lowers stress. Spending time outside especially in the sunlight raises your serotonin levels. Serotonin is an important chemical in the human body that helps regulate your mood, appetite and digestion, sleep, learning and memory, and sexual desire and function. It's thought that there may also be an association between serotonin and depression.

Improves sleep. Going outdoors will help you set your sleep cycle by affecting certain cells in your eyes. These cells need outdoor light to get your body's internal clock set correctly. Early morning sunlight seems to be the best in helping regulate sleep. The need for sunlight to help your internal clock will increase as you grow older. When you age, your eyes are less able to absorb light, and you're more likely to have problems with sleep.

Improves Focus & Immunity. Scientists think it's the green surroundings of the outdoors that affect our focus and attention. In one research study, children with ADHD concentrated better after they took a simple walk in the park, compared to when they took a walk in a city area filled with buildings and pavement. In addition, the great outdoors helps because plants put organic compounds into the air that boosts your immune system. Sunlight also activates "T cells" that help fight infection.

Helps Control Your Weight. Getting outside, especially in the early morning helps you control your weight. As we mentioned earlier, the light helps balance your sleep and energy use. But if you get 20-30 minutes between 8 a.m. to noon (the earlier the better) it will help you with weight control.

Just remember if you spend more than a few minutes in the sun, be sure you to wear sun screen or cover up with long sleeves and don't forget your sunglasses. Carry your cell phone with you in case of an emergency.

The more you exercise regularly, the more your energy level will improve. You will begin to notice that with consistent, moderate exercise, you will better maintain your endurance throughout the day.

P

Possibly the most important fatigue-fighter is good quality sleep. If you're feeling fatigued each morning and throughout the day, a lack of good quality sleep may be the problem and contributing to chronic fatigue and exhaustion. In addition, studies have shown that poor sleep quality can contribute to chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease and even shortened life expectancy. And of course, fatigue has immediate risks to you as a professional driver, including impaired driving and other safety concerns.

Going to bed at different times each night, getting less than 7 hours of sleep and tossing and turning throughout the night all contribute to poor sleep. To improve sleep quality and get natural energy, it's essential to develop better sleep habits. As much as is possible considering your route and delivery date, try to maintain a consistent bedtime. By getting enough hours of sleep and improving your sleep comfort, you can get a deeper sleep and wake up feeling more refreshed and ready for the long drive ahead. There is no better natural energy booster than proper sleep. With better sleep comes greater endurance and higher energy levels.



But getting regular quality sleep is one of the biggest challenges long-haul drivers face. Due to irregular sleep times, noisy truck stops, uncomfortable mattresses, and an unhealthy lifestyle, it's not a surprise. So how do you, as a truck driver, get better sleep and improve your health and safety – as well as the safety of all those

on the road around you? There are many different ways that drivers can improve sleep quality, but it helps if your company supports you in your efforts and offers additional resources.

Better mattress. One challenge for drivers getting good quality sleep is that the mattresses in truck sleepers are uncomfortable and often of very poor quality. Comfort can be improved with a 3- to 6-inch-thick memory foam pad or a higher-quality mattress. Some trucking companies provide these for drivers, some offer either or both of these options to drivers on a payment plan, or some provide incentives for drivers to purchase them.

Move. So, it seems one good health habit is connected to another, right? The more movement or exercise you get throughout the day, the more melatonin your body produces, which helps you get deeper, more restful sleep, and to stay asleep longer. The better you sleep the better your body will recover and build up the energy you've expended the day before. Stretch each time you get out of your cab. Take a walk during your breaks whenever possible. Try out some of the exercises on the video links above. Even while you are driving a few

neck and arm stretches – keeping your eyes on the road of course – will keep blood flowing through your arms and upper body. It also helps to stay active, even on your off days.

Be careful with caffeine. It's best if you can reduce or cut out caffeine, especially during the six hours before bedtime. Caffeine inhibits the production of melatonin. So even if you are able to fall asleep after drinking coffee or a Mountain Dew, without enough melatonin, your body won't reach the deeper and more restorative states of sleep and won't stay asleep for a full night's rest. Drivers should limit their intake to no more than 60 mg of caffeine per day. Eating healthy, taking a high-quality multi-vitamin and exercising will help give your body the energy it needs without caffeine.

Music can make a huge difference. Listen to relaxing meditation music as you are trying to fall asleep. In particular, delta waves binaural sleep meditation can help. A delta wave is a type of brain wave that is thought to come from deep in the brain and are associated deep sleep. During sleep, the brain cycles through a number of different stages each characterized by the type of brain activity that occurs during each stage. During the initial stages of sleep, people are still awake and somewhat alert. At this point, quick and small brain waves are produced. Eventually, the brain begins to slow down and slower and deeper waves occur. People are far less responsive and less aware of the outside environment at this point during this deeper and more restorative sleep. Diets that are very high in fat and low in carbohydrates, help to increase delta waves. Some drugs and chemicals influence the brain's delta waves. Long term abuse of alcohol can lead to lasting decreases in delta activity. The frequency of these waves helps the brain reach and stay in deeper states of sleep, so you wake up more rested and alert. Drivers can find a variety of these tracks on YouTube.

Sleep apnea. Has been a huge issue within the trucking industry and according to one study affects approximately 28% of truck drivers. Obstructive sleep apnea is a serious condition that interrupts sleep and significantly reduces alertness. In particular, drivers with a neck size of over 17 inches for men (16 inches for women) are at high risk for sleep apnea. Other risk factors include loud snoring and smoking. If you fall into any one of these categories, get tested and see if you need a CPAP machines for treatment. Many drivers with sleep apnea say their quality of life has drastically improved since they started using a CPAP

machine and they now can't imagine going without it. It's one change that can dramatically improve the quality of your life.

D

iving is a stressful occupation. And there's no question that stress causes physical effects on the body, including chronic pain and fatigue. Stress day-in and day out means that your body is in often in a fight-or-flight mode, which releases stress chemicals like cortisol and adrenaline. And if the stress is continuous, it can lead to burnout and a lack of motivation, which often results in feeling tired even after short periods of driving.



Additionally, people who are overworked and overstressed don't usually make time

for healthy habits, such as diet, exercise and sleep that are required to keep your body operating at peak performance. If you're feeling exhausted, it's important to look at the load you're carrying and lighten it however you can.

But that's easier said than done. Some of the things we've already discussed – eat healthy, exercise, improve sleep, stay hydrated – are stress reducers as much as they are good health habits themselves.

Others include:

Spending time with family and friends. If you can't be there in person, rely on technology like FaceTime, Skype or WhatsApp to do some video visits. Interact with other drivers and be helpful to others in whatever way you can. Some get more formally involved in helping activities – such as Truckers Against Trafficking, that trains truck drivers to spot and report signs of human trafficking.

Listening to audio books or podcasts can also reduce stress. Choose topics that are interesting but not stressful themselves. Some podcasts even relate to health and wellness and can help keep you motivated to maintain your wellness on the road. Calming music can also help get you through stressful driving conditions. But be aware that calming, soothing music can make you drowsy. If you find that happening, change to some more upbeat tunes.

Equipment can help. Squeezing a small palm size “stress ball” can decrease stress by giving you an anxiety outlet – and depending on the firmness of the ball – can increase grip strength. A cooling towel – especially in hot weather - will remove moisture from the body, keep you cool and reduce stress.

A little planning goes a long way toward reducing stress. Making sure you know your route and the time it takes to get there. Use apps and other technology at your disposal to compliment your planning and provide up-to-date traffic reporting.

Breathing exercises sound to simple to work. And yet they do. One recommendation is to breathe in slowly for seven to eight counts, hold your breath for a couple seconds and then breath out for a count of 10. Rinse and repeat and your stress will go down considerably. **Developing and keeping good sleep habits is a long-term solution for fighting fatigue and staying well.**

crashes
fussing bad
and-go
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DRIVER
tough
day
STRESS
snarl
weather
kids
appointment
detour
low
gas
honking
tailgating
traffic

The Interconnectedness of Everything Wellness. As you've found out from reading this series of blogs, ALL GOOD HEALTH HABITS ARE INTERRELATED. One good habit can improve multiple aspects of health. Each aspect of health is affected by multiple habits. Adopt one good habit or eliminate one bad one and it will improve multiple components of your health. It's like a good savings plan. A small deposit here. A small deposit there. And before long you're much healthier than before. Don't try to do it all at once. Pick one or a few and really focus on those until it's a reflex to have a healthier lifestyle. And who knows, a fellow driver may observe your good habits and be inspired to improve his or her own health.

What's Your Why for Wellness and Fitness? Why do you care about your wellness and fitness? Maybe it's your significant other. Maybe it's the kids or your parents that need your help. Maybe it's your favorite hobbies – like hunting, fishing, woodworking or playing a pick-up game of basketball? Maybe it's all of the above.

But what about the way you make your living as a truck driver? The next job you apply for will likely include a pre-hire Physical Abilities Test as a requirement for employment. You'll be tested to see if you have the physical abilities to perform the most difficult parts of the job of driving, specific to the company you're applying to. You'll need good balance to prevent a slip or fall. You'll need strength to pick up freight or a tarp or pull the 5th wheel release or open the trailer doors. You'll need flexibility to climb onto a flatbed or into the back of a trailer. You'll need to be able to squat and stoop to do your pre-trip inspection. You'll need endurance and focus to sustain the long hours of service without having an accident. Will you be able to pass that test? Perhaps not if you have not taken care of your body.

If you use your body to do your work, then you belong to a class of industrial athletes – athletes who are critical to our society and critical to your family for support. Stand ready to do the job. Take care of your body. It's the only one you'll get.



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