

CENTERLINE DRIVERS
WELLNESS ON THE ROAD

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Staying healthy while traveling can be challenging. With extended periods spent on the road, it can become tough to maintain a healthy diet, get enough exercise, and manage stress. However, setting healthy habits is crucial to enjoying your free time and succeeding on the road.

We have created a wellness quick guide that contains helpful tips on how to reduce stress, practice meditation, consume nutritious snacks, engage in exercises, and stay hydrated. We aim to assist you in establishing a solid foundation for a healthy lifestyle, both at home and on the go.

Easy ways to **reduce stress** as a truck driver

As you already know, stress is part of the job. Between traffic, tight deadlines and long hours of sitting, driving can be an incredibly taxing job.




Learning how to cope with the built up stress that driving causes can help you improve your daily life. Here are a few tips to help relieve stress.



Signs of stress

There are many signs of stress but many of them are easy to write off as part of “daily life”. However chronic stress can lead to a variety of health problems including mental health problems, heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, heart attacks, stroke and gastrointestinal problems.

Signs of stress **include:**

Low energy	Headaches	Upset stomach		Insomnia
Frequent colds		Chest pain and rapid heartbeat	Nervousness and shaking	
Clenched jaw and grinding teeth		Becoming easily agitated or frustrated		Feeling overwhelmed
Having difficult relaxing	Racing thoughts	Forgetfulness and disorganization	Changes in appetite	

This is just an abbreviated list. There are many signs and symptoms of chronic stress and should not be ignored.



Eat healthy, whole foods

It's hard to eat healthy on the road. But making small modifications to your diet (like no bun on a hamburger or adding extra vegetables) and bringing your own nutritious snacks can make a huge difference. Staying hydrated also helps fight stress and fatigue so make sure to be drinking water while eating your healthy snack.



Get out and stretch

When possible, get out and stretch for 3-5 minutes. Stretching can help relax your muscles and ease tension. Sitting all day can put a lot of stress on your body and moving your body around can help clear your head. Exercising as much as possible also helps reduce stress as well as increase your energy and strength. Even taking a short walk can help clear your mind and balance your stress levels.



Be present with loved ones

Driving all day can be lonely. When you come home, learning how to be fully present with your friends and family can help relieve these feelings. Try to focus and actively listen to what they have to say about their own lives. Instead of worrying about things in the future, stay present in the moment and enjoy everything happening right then.

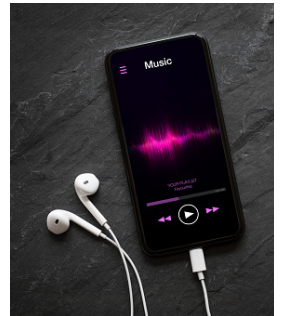
Catch some zzz's

Getting a good night's sleep is critical to reducing stress as well as increasing general wellness and health. Ideally, you should be getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night. Keep your room dark and cool, turning off electronics before bed and having a nighttime routine can help ensure a restful night.



Listen to music or podcasts

Listening to some of your favorite music, a podcast or an audiobook can help take your mind off a stressful driving situation. Tuning into something that is interesting or stimulating can help focus your mind and relieve tension. Music can also help a great deal. Soothing music is great if it doesn't make you drowsy, but anything that you enjoy will get the job done.



Spend time with friends and family

Take the time to spend time with the people you love and who make you happy. Driving can be very isolating so making sure you take some free time to reset yourself and be present with your loved ones.



reduces driving stress and improve your daily life balance

The quick guide on **meditation**

It appears every time we turn around, the world has increased its pace by five-fold, placing more and more demands on our time. As a truck driver, you have the added stress of bad weather, traffic jams and tight deadlines. All of this can leave you feeling stressed, anxious, and depressed. If this is the case, it may be an excellent opportunity for you to start a meditation practice. While you may think of meditation as a formal practice done in yoga or by monks, it can actually be done anywhere, at any time. There is a wide array of meditation practices from which to choose, each of which helps you achieve your goals in different ways.

The benefits of meditation

Meditation can help calm your mind and create balance in your mind and body. And the **benefits of meditation** can extend beyond the time you spend meditating.

Meditation has been shown to reduce stress, control anxiety, enhance self-awareness, improve attention spans and aid in getting better sleep.

As a driver, it could mean keeping your cool in a high stress situation and being able to focus your attention on the road for longer. In fact, if you are considering starting some type of meditation practice, you are in good company. Roughly 35 million Americans, or approximately 14 percent of the general population, use some type of meditation technique.

Types of meditation

There are a variety of meditation types to choose from and it may take some experimenting to see what works best for you and your lifestyle. The main principle of meditation is to ground your body through your breath and focus your attention on an object, mantra or even your breathing.

Other forms of meditation include:

Guided Meditation: Sometimes called guided imagery or visualization, with this method of meditation you form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing. You can guide yourself through a visualization using as many sensory details as possible or you can use a guided meditation app or teacher to focus your practice.

Mindful Meditation: This type of meditation is based on being mindful, or having an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment. This can be done outside meditation but during it, you focus on what you are experiencing and let thoughts pass without judgement.

Mantra Meditation: In this type of meditation, you silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to calm the mind.

A good way to start as a beginner is by taking steady, even breaths when you find yourself stressed out or anxious. Some drivers also find benefits in taking breaks in nature or meditating first thing in the morning or right when they get home. Try a variety of methods and see what works for you. Even just taking 5 minutes a day to deep breath.



meditation reduces stress, controls anxiety and improves your attention span on the road

Healthy **snack ideas** to take on the road

Staying healthy on the road can be difficult. The choices are often gas stations or fast food restaurants, both filled with unhealthy landmines. Packing your own snacks is often the best option for ensuring you're eating something nutritious and well-balanced.

1. **Vegetables/fruit and peanut butter**

Apples celery with peanut butter can easily be pre-portioned and brought on the road. There are many options for peanut butter in single serving containers.

2. **Trail mix**

This is one of the easiest portable snacks because it won't spoil and provides a good mix of fat and protein. Make your own by combining 2 parts nuts with one part dried fruit or granola and put a cup serving in a plastic baggie. There are also a lot of recipes for adding your own flavors like bbq to your trail mix. Or try one of the pre-packaged options, which may be one of your best choices when faced with a gas station filled with chips and candy.



3. **Beef or turkey jerky**

Picking a brand of jerky that doesn't contain a large amount of sugar or preservatives can make this snack a great high-protein option. Or you can try making your own!

4. **Bento box**

Making a bento box filled with healthy options can be a great way to snack with some variety. You can find snack boxes at most major retailers. You can fill it with cheese slices, hard-boiled eggs, crackers, fruit (try frozen grapes) or nuts. Can also make a great breakfast on-the-go as well.

5. **Vegetable chips or popcorn**

If you have a craving for something crunchy, there are some good alternatives to potato chips. Veggie or plantain chips are now common in most stores and offer more nutritional value than a regular bag of Lays. Popcorn is also a great option for a low-calorie but high-volume food. 3 cups of it is only 192 calories, making for a highly satisfying snack.

Eating healthy on the road shouldn't be hard. With a little forethought, you can bring along a few healthy and delicious snacks.

Are you (actually) drinking enough water?

Drinking enough water is critical to both your mental and physical health as a truck driver. Although it can be tempting to not drink a lot of water in order to eliminate stops, the consequences of that to your health can be detrimental. Learn how drinking more water can benefit your health and learn how to increase your water intake.

The benefits of proper hydration

The benefits of drinking enough water is almost too many to list. Basically all body functions are impacted in some way by water and can easily go awry if you are not properly hydrated. Here are just a **few of the benefits**:

- **Promotes cardio health:** Dehydration lowers your blood volume. This means that your body has to work even harder to pump blood through your body to get enough oxygen to your cells.
- **Cleanses your body:** Your kidneys are the organs that can help filter waste out of your body. Without water, your kidneys cannot function properly.
- **Keeps your body cool:** If you are dehydrated, it **takes longer for the blood vessels** to expand and cool your body down.
- **Keeps muscles and joints working properly:** Water is critical to ensuring your muscles get proper nutrition and lubricating joints.
- **Increased alertness:** Your brain is very impacted by how hydrated you are. **Studies** show that even mild dehydration can impair aspects of brain function, mood, concentration and alertness.
- **Reduced stress on the body and mind:** Being dehydrated generally creates stress in the body. Not having enough water to do bodily functions slows down and stresses your internal organs. The stress of dehydration also stresses your body and impacts mental health and focus.



drinking water is critical to your mental and physical health

Ways to stay hydrated

Now that you know how important hydration is, it is time to switch focus on how to stay properly hydrated. These 3 tips can help you work towards reaching proper hydration.

1. Set Goals

The first step to making sure you are properly hydrated is to figure out how much water your body actually needs. 8 glasses is the standard rule of thumb but that may not be adequate for everyone. **A better rule to follow** is to drink between ½-1 ounce of water for each pound you weigh. For example, a 180 pound person should drink between 90 and 180 ounces of water a day.

To find out if you are drinking enough water is to check the color of your urine (it should be clear) and also to monitor if you are thirsty throughout the day. Thirst is an indicator that your body is already dehydrated so the goal is always to drink enough water that you are rarely thirsty.



**Drink between
1/2 - 1 ounce of water
per pound you weigh**



2. Track your water

Now that you've set your water goal, the next step is to track it. There are a few ways to do this.

There are a many water bottles on the market now that track the amount of ounces you are drinking. Tracking your water is also now as easy as entering it into an app. Many fitness apps have water trackers and there are separate water tracking apps that track ounces and remind you to drink water if you are behind on your daily goal.



many fitness apps have water trackers to help with your daily intake

3. Add flavor

It can often be difficult to drink more water if you are used to drinking soda or energy drinks with sugar and flavor. But drinking more water doesn't have to be boring. There a quite a few options for making your water more flavorful. Adding fruit, vegetables or herbs to your water is a healthy way to bump up the flavor in your water. You can also add sugar-free water enhancements like lemonade or other flavors.

There are a lot of options available at your local grocery store. Even making iced tea without sugar is a good way to consume more water. Herbal tea is an even better option because it doesn't contain caffeine and often has additional health benefits. Experiment what works for you and what helps you drink more water throughout your day.

How to **combat** back, shoulder and knee pain

While it may seem that your biggest risk of being injured as a truck driver is getting into an accident, it's not uncommon to experience some level of pain in your back, shoulders and knees without ever being in a collision. What causes each type of pain and, more importantly, how can you help ease it?

Back pain

One **study** found that 59% of truck drivers have pain in the lower back. The one factor that appeared to contribute most to pain in this area of the body was spending longer days behind the steering wheel.



If you notice that your back hurts after driving truck all day, start by taking a look at your posture. Ideally, your back should be straight while driving versus slouching forward. Work to keep your shoulders against the back of the seat and your elbows closer to your sides as opposed to holding them out.

It may also be helpful to adjust your seat to a healthier position. This involves reclining the back of the seat slightly and moving the base far enough forward so you don't have to stretch to reach the pedals.

If your truck's seat has lumbar support, adjust it so that it provides some tension on your lower spine. There are also lumbar support pillows you can purchase if your seat doesn't offer this option. You can also help ease back pain as a truck driver by doing a few stretches throughout the day, such as when you stop for lunch or while loading or unloading.



One to try is to grab one knee and pull it up to your chest, then do the same on the other side. You should feel a stretch in your lower back.

Shoulder pain

Shoulder pain can occur while driving truck mainly due to the repetitive movements related to the job. This can include actions you take while climbing into or out of your cab, tarping and more. Shoulder pain can also be caused by the amount of tension you must keep on the steering wheel to keep the truck from drifting, especially during inclement weather.

This continued force and tension can make your shoulder really ache by the end of the day.

To help keep shoulder pain at bay, take the time to regularly relax your shoulder muscles. Do shoulder rolls or shoulder shrugs a few times every hour to get your shoulders to release.

When stopped at a traffic light, use this time to gently pull one arm across the front of your body. Do the other arm at the next light. This helps to give your shoulder muscles a much-needed break.

Knee pain

The joints in your knees are also at risk of hurting as a truck driver and the cause



is often either sitting for long periods of time or the impact from jumping out of your cab, which is sometimes referred to as jumper's knee.

If your knee pain is caused by sitting for long periods, adjusting your seat differently may help. Some health experts recommend that the knees be bent at 90 degrees while driving; others suggest more of a 20-degree bend. Play around with different positions to see which one feels best for you.

If the pain is a result of jumping out of the cab, try to lessen the impact by landing with softened knees. In other words, don't lock your knees when you land. Instead, keep them slightly bent to help absorb the impact.

Walking around for a few minutes each time you stop may also help ease your driving-related knee pain. If your pain is more bothersome, you may even consider wearing a knee brace to better support this lower body joint.

Driving truck doesn't have to equal pain. Paying attention to your posture, adjusting your seat and doing stretches throughout the day are all good ways to help prevent and ease these truck-driving discomforts.

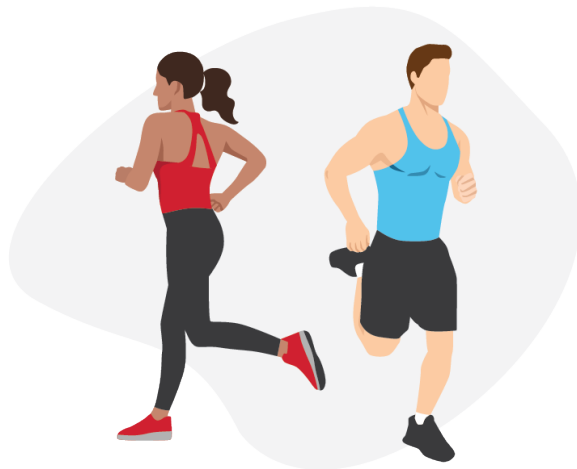


prevent joint pain. pay attention to your posture and do stretches throughout the day



Quick **exercises** for truckers

The **Physical Activity Guidelines** for Americans recommends that adults get a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio per week, along with two or more full-body strength training sessions. If this amount of activity feels overwhelming, the guidelines add that doing any physical activity offers health benefits. Just as construction workers benefit from doing side bends and hamstring stretches, and nurses benefit from squats and lunges, there are a few exercises that are perfect for truck drivers. These can be done off the road or during rest breaks to help counteract the effects of sitting for long periods of time. Here are four to consider, as well as the advantages they provide.

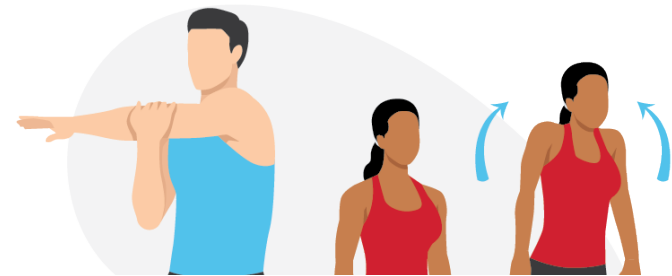


Running or walking

The great thing about running and walking is that you can do them anywhere. All you need is a pair of athletic shoes and you are good to go. Both of these activities can get your heart rate going, which is beneficial for cardiovascular health. You also tend to feel better mentally after a walk or a run.

And if you do these cardio activities outside, you can increase your vitamin D levels naturally thanks to the sun's rays. **Vitamin D** helps keep your bones and muscles strong. It also bolsters your immune system, making it more resilient against the latest bug or cold.

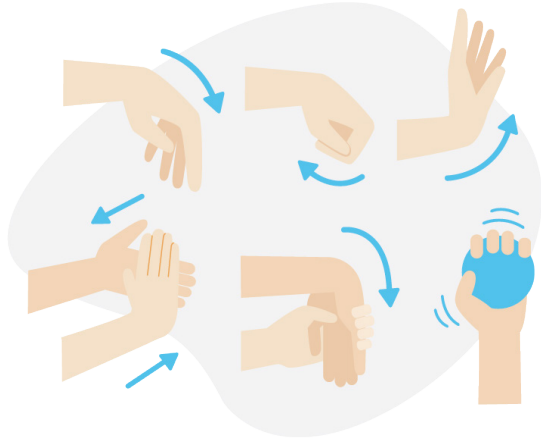
Whenever you stop for a break or lunch, take a little walk, run or jog around the area first. Hitting the pavement or trails after a long day behind the wheel is also a good way to get rid of the stress that has built up while on the road.



Shoulder shrugs

It's not uncommon for drivers to hold tension in the shoulder area. If this tension continues to build without being released, you may notice tightness or tenderness in this area. This can make the workday feel even longer.

When at a stoplight or waiting for your trailer to be unloaded, do a couple of shoulder shrugs. Sit upright in your seat and pull your shoulders back and down. Then lift the shoulders toward your ears, as if someone asked you a question and you don't know the answer. Hold for a few seconds before lowering the shoulders back down. Do this a couple of times to get your shoulders to relax.



Hand stretches

Just as the shoulders can get tight and tense when driving all day, resulting in pain and stiffness, the same is true for your hands. Your hands are constantly engaged as a trucker, whether holding the wheel, assisting with a turn or shifting the truck. Take a few minutes several times a day to give them a bit of relief.

One hand stretch to try is pulling the top of the fingers back toward your body, holding them in this position for a few seconds. Another is to make a fist, then release the fist, straighten your fingers and try to extend and spread the fingers as much as possible. Do this a couple of times every so often to get your hand muscles to relax.



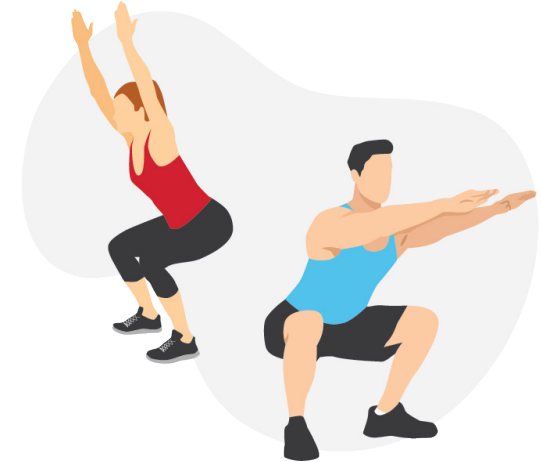
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Biceps curls

The stronger your upper arms, the easier it becomes to use them throughout the day. Strong arms are better able to support all the movements associated with driving a truck, from continuously operating the steering wheel to properly securing the load with tiedown straps.

Keep a dumbbell in your cab and do a few biceps curls during your stops. Lift the weight toward your shoulder, hold it briefly in this position, then lower the weight back down until your elbow is at a 90-degree angle. Just be sure to do both sides so one arm doesn't get bigger than the other.



Squats

Spend all day in a sitting position and you'll likely feel it in your legs. This is partly due to the blood flow being restricted to the lower body after long periods spent in one position. You can get the blood flowing again by doing a few squats when you get out of the truck.

When doing squats, imagine that you are about to sit back and down onto a chair. Lower your body while keeping your back straight. This exercise is also good for building core strength, which helps support good posture when spending a lot of time behind the wheel.

As always, minimize distractions while driving and safety first, so please only do these exercises when out of your vehicle during rest breaks or off the road.

WELLNESS ON THE ROAD: A TRUCK DRIVER'S GUIDE TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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