

HEART HEALTH 2020

12 WAYS TO STAY HEART HEALTHY ON THE ROAD

Iteiha, R (2020, February 26). 12 ways to stay heart healthy on the road. Retrieved from <https://www.omnitracs.com/blog/12-ways-stay-heart-healthy-road>

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, truck drivers are more prone to heart disease than the average American worker. That's why we've gathered 12 helpful, heart-healthy tips with truck drivers in mind.



TIP #1: EAT THE RAINBOW

Nutritious is delicious! Leafy greens, berries, carrots, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes are just a few of the colorful, whole foods that are good for your heart. Red, yellow, and orange vegetables are filled with carotenoids, fiber, and vitamins, and leafy greens are filled with minerals, antioxidants, vitamin K, and nitrates. Vitamin K protects your arteries and promotes proper blood clotting, and dietary nitrates have been shown to improve blood pressure.

TIP #2: LEAVE SMOKING TO THE BEARS, AND DON'T BRING ANY TURKEYS WITH YOU

According to the Cleveland Clinic, cigarette smoking accounts for one-fifth of all heart-related deaths in the U.S.

Quitting smoking by simply cutting cigarettes out cold turkey is not effective for most in the long term. Extensive research has shown that quitting cold turkey only works about 5% of the time. Nicotine replacement therapy and medications are deemed as far more effective nowadays, but be sure to consult with your doctor to find out which method is right for you.

TIP #3: FIND A FORM OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY YOU LIKE — AND STICK WITH IT

Sitting down for hours at a time can be challenging for your physical health, and this is something truck drivers in particular must navigate around given the sedentary nature of their jobs. Fortunately, weigh stations and rest areas often come with scenic walking trails to help you get the 20-30 minutes of moderate physical activity your body needs.



TIP #4: HAVE A CUP OF TEA — OR TWO

The flavonoids, or plant substances, in green tea can reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, and they can also increase the efficiency of heart muscle cells and improve blood vessel functions. The next time you're craving that caffeinated pick-me-up in the middle of the day, aim to brew or grab a nice cup of tea.

TIP #5: MANAGE DANGERS TO HEART HEALTH, LIKE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND CHOLESTEROL

High blood pressure damages blood vessels, so making lifestyle changes to get your blood pressure in a healthy range should be top of mind when it comes to heart health. To do this, look to maintain a healthy weight, reduce sodium in your diet, and eat less processed food.

There are two types of cholesterol — LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, and HDL, or “good” cholesterol. To raise your good cholesterol while lowering your bad cholesterol, avoid foods with trans fats, since these foods often offer limited to no nutritional value.

Trans fats are most commonly found in partially hydrogenated oils, which you will find in processed and fast foods. To combat this, prepare healthy meals and seek out healthy meal and snack options if you have to grab food on the go.

TIP #6: LISTEN TO A HEALTH-CENTRIC PODCAST

There are only so many 80s playlists to listen to, so many truck drivers have dived into the world of podcasts. Listening to educational, health-centric podcasts all day long isn't exactly a fun and feasible goal, so why not commit to listening to one or two of these podcasts every week?

Some of our favorites are:

Nutrition Facts with Dr. Greger: This podcast is great for small doses of health education, since Dr. Greger delivers evidence-based nutritional perspective in just 15 minutes.

Mind Pump: Raw Fitness Truth: This podcast series is hosted by four athletes who look to get their listeners excited about physical fitness while educating on safe and healthy ways to work out.

Dishing Up Nutrition: Licensed nutritionists and dieticians talk all things nutritious food in this podcast series, with a special focus on our bodies' relationship to food.

TIP #7: PRIORITIZE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

According to the American Psychological Association, men and women diagnosed with clinical depression are more than twice as likely to develop coronary artery disease or suffer a heart attack. In addition, people with healthier mental states have healthier levels of fibrinogen and cortisol in their blood, which makes them less vulnerable to cardiovascular disease.

Clinical depression is on the more severe side of the depression scale, so we highly recommend you consult with your doctor on healthy ways to address this if you are suffering or worry about suffering from it.

TIP #8: FOCUS ON YOUR SCENERY

One of the most underrated and simultaneously special perks of being an over-the-road truck driver is enjoying the abundance of scenery available on your routes each day.

Some areas, like the West Coast, provide more striking scenery in the form of beaches and mountains, while other areas are home to the quiet and peaceful scenery of endless greenery. Wherever you may be, the scenic route can help you practice mindfulness and enjoy the ride.

TIP #9: MAKE TIME FOR SOLID SLEEP

We know you've probably heard about the importance of sleep more times than you can count, but that's because it's so essential to so many health factors, including heart health.

With the long hours and stress factors associated with truck driving, getting good, consistent sleep can be difficult. A recent study found that men who suffered from severe sleep apnea over an eight-year period were nearly 60 percent more likely to develop congestive heart failure.

Healthy adults require 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. Here are some tips on how to sleep better:

Soothing sounds, like ocean waves and thunderstorms, can really help people fall and stay sleep, and they can be found on all smartphone app stores for little to no cost.

We all love technology, but try to steer clear of using your cellphone or watching television before bed, as the blue light and noise are often stimulating as opposed to relaxing. Instead, read a book or meditate.

When it comes to sleep, environment is everything. Make your sleeper a spot you really look forward to sleeping in every night. Investing in some good-quality pillows and blankets can go a long way.

TIP #10: TREAT YOURSELF

You read that right! Eating chocolate is known to raise your dopamine and serotonin levels for when you need a pick-me-up or some stress relief. Dark chocolate in particular is known for its flavonoids and antioxidants — two very heart-healthy essentials. Plus, dark chocolate contains less sugar, so you can feel even better about getting your sweet fix without overdoing it.



TIP #11: GET IN THE MEDITATION ZONE

Stress is one of the most known dangers to heart health, and encountering drivers and instances on the road can present you with unavoidable stressful situations. Meditation is a great zone to tap into when looking for a healthy way to navigate these situations.

Taking deep and controlled breaths, fixating on a point while stuck in traffic, and listening to guided meditation for 10 minutes before bed are all forms of meditation you can practice as a truck driver. As with most healthy practices, consistency is key.

TIP #12: TAKE A DIVE INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean diet incorporates healthy foods with rich, traditional flavor to make eating healthy a delicious journey every step of the way. The diet's stand-out foods, like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, healthy fats, and fish, are all core heart-healthy foods.

Contrary to popular belief, you can easily find a lot of these foods on the road. While meal prepping is always a great and cost-effective option, you can find healthy options — like salads and fruit — at most fast food restaurants, gas stations, and truck stops nowadays, not to mention healthy restaurants scattered between.

