

Safety Bulletin

Stay Healthy Between Your DOT Physical Exams

At least once every two years, as a professional driver, you visit your doctor for your DOT physical exam. It gives you a great baseline on your current health status. However, the actions you take between those exams make the biggest difference in your overall well-being.

It's no secret truck drivers are at risk for many health issues. A 2014 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) survey of long-haul truck drivers revealed that seven in ten drivers are obese, and 17 percent are morbidly obese. Those extra pounds increase your risk for many chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer, joint and back pain, and stroke.

You can stay healthier by taking control of your health between your DOT physical exams. Some tips to get you started:

- **Exercise daily** – A 15-to-20 minute workout will increase your fitness level. You can get started with a walk or run around your truck. You also can use your truck as part of your fitness routine, such as standing alongside it (when stopped) and doing standing push-ups against the cab door. Small hand weights also can help you build strength.
- **Eat well** – Turn your craving for fast food into a craving for fresh food. Most truck stops, convenience stores and even fast-food chains have plenty of healthy items – salads, fruits, vegetables. Choose them so you can eat on the go and avoid the extra calories and fat you'll find in burgers, fries and chips.
- **Watch what you drink** – Stay away from the extra calories of sugary drinks like soda and fruit juices. Instead, choose water – a great low-calorie substitute.
- **Quit smoking** – The NIOSH survey shows that more than half of long-haul truck drivers smoke cigarettes, which raises your chances for lung cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke. Quitting is hard, but not impossible, and it's one of the best things you can do for your body.
- **Get enough sleep** – According to the NIOSH survey, 27 percent of long-haul truck drivers get less than six hours of sleep a night. Truck drivers also have a high rate of sleep apnea, which is related to obesity. The more fit you become, the more likely you'll sleep better at night.
- **Sync your smartphone** – You'll find many free apps, such as MyFitnessPal, that can help you track your calorie and fitness levels. Use them to track your journey to better health.
- **Follow your doctor's orders** – If you have a condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure, be sure to listen to your physician and follow his or her instructions.

