

Taking the Healthy Route

Truck driving puts you at risk for compulsive eating and other unhealthy behaviors which threaten your health. In fact, the average life expectancy for truck drivers is 61 years—16 years less than the national average, according to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention. But by making a few simple lifestyle changes and making better decisions regarding your diet, you can beat this statistic and live a long, happy, healthy life. You can control your own destiny by making smart eating choices.



Eat breakfast. Start your day with a nutritious breakfast, to kick start your metabolism and give your body much needed energy! And don't skip meals throughout the day. Skipping meals not only brings your metabolism to a halt, but also makes you more likely to overeat at your next meal. Feeling starved or famished works against you.

Plan ahead. Plan what you will eat before you eat it that way you make conscious decisions that create healthy and balanced meals. Cut up and prepare fruits and vegetables the day before so they are ready to go the next day. Along with fruits and vegetables, pack healthy snacks such as trail mix, baked potato chips, and unsalted nuts. Be sure to measure serving sizes and keep them in plastic bags so you know you aren't eating too many calories in your snacks.

Cut down on sugary drinks and caffeine. Drink water to quench your thirst. Even though soda and coffee may help to keep you awake and alert on the road, you will feel a lot better physically and mentally if you avoid these unhealthy drinks. Start slowly, and eventually, you won't need any of the sugary pick-me-ups.

Choose healthy alternatives. When packing meals, select healthier options like salads, whole grain breads, lean meats such as skinless poultry and fish, and fat-free or low-fat dairy. At truck stops, order salads and ask for grilled or baked options instead of fried foods.

Be aware of portion sizes. When snacking, never eat out of the bag or package. Read nutrition labels and pay attention to serving sizes to measure the amount of food you are eating in order to avoid overeating and consuming excess calories. For meals, follow the guidelines on www.myplate.gov and allot half of your plate for fruits and vegetables, a quarter for whole grains or starchy foods, and another quarter for protein. Add a separate small portion for a glass of low or non-fat milk or yogurt.

Exercise. Long work hours make it hard to exercise. However exercise helps you work better by feeling good and enjoying better health. Walk at truck stops or take laps around your truck (32 laps around a rig is about 1 mile.) Remember to start slowly and progress and set goals that are realistic for you. Weigh yourself once per week in order to focus on weight maintenance or weight loss as a health goal.