



Commercial Driver Health Education

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Notes

Welcome

Dear Professional Driver,

Affinity Occupational Health wants to help you stay healthy, on the road and at home. You can help yourself, your family, and the safety of the traveling public by staying well. Your Fed Med card depends on it, too!

This booklet contains information to help you live healthy every day.

In good health,

Affinity Occupational Health Staff

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Fatigue

Serious problems need serious solutions. Take fatigue seriously! Drowsiness could cost your life. During a “micro sleep” of two seconds, your vehicle can travel more than 50 yards down the road - or off it! Even if you don’t nod off, sleepiness impairs your judgment.

Professional drivers cannot rely on the simple tricks many people try to overcome drowsiness. These just don’t work. You cannot “bank” sleep by saving it up ahead of time and then borrowing it later. The caffeine in coffee or soda can help you feel more alert, but the effects will not last very long. Chewing gum, eating, turning up the radio, or rolling down a window also fail to solve the problem.

Young people need more sleep than adults. Males under 25 have the greatest risk of falling asleep and make up half of the victims of fatigue-related crashes.

Some ways you can avoid sleepiness while driving are:

Don’t get sleepy in the first place! Adequate sleep needs to take first place in your daily routine. Almost everyone needs 8 hours. Don’t short-change yourself. If you do, it will take at least two full nights sleep in a row, not just one, to eliminate drowsiness.

- Talk to your doctor if you have problems sleeping or if you still feel tired even with adequate sleep. See the sleep apnea section of this pamphlet.
- Pull off the road for physical activity or a short nap (25 minutes). To be safe, drivers need a break every 3 hours.
- Study your vehicle’s sleeping quarters. It’s your home away from home. Fix any problems you find, such as noise, poor ventilation, high or low temperatures that might prevent you from sleeping well. It should also have adjustable interior lighting, since you use the same space both while awake and asleep.
- Don’t take medicine that may cause drowsiness while on duty. Read warning labels before taking any over-the-counter drug, especially allergy pills, cold medications, pain pills, and muscle relaxants. Get the pharmacist’s advice (it’s free!) about your medicines, both prescription and off-the-shelf. Have your doctor fully explain any prescription you receive. Tell them you drive professionally.

Occupational Health Services

“Better Health, Better Business”

Affinity Health System ranks as one of the largest employers in Wisconsin’s Fox River Valley. We understand the challenges employers face in maintaining a healthy workforce.

Affinity Occupational Health is devoted to keeping you healthy by providing counseling, rehabilitation, on-site evaluations and more. We offer these programs to help you and the community, too. Our in-depth knowledge of workplace regulations, workers’ compensation laws and OSHA rules lets companies and their employees benefit from health and safety initiatives. We first brought our programs to the Fox Cities and Oshkosh more than 25 years ago. No other health care provider in the area has more experience in occupational medicine than Affinity Health System.

Affinity NurseDirect

A Free 24-hour Health Advice Service

Call and you’ll speak directly to an Affinity NurseDirect registered nurse who can answer your questions about illness, injuries or other health-related problems.

1-800-362-9900 (Toll Free)

Consultation and Expert Advice

Our experienced nurses are available to help with your health care concerns, whether you or your child has a fever at 3 o’clock in the morning or unexplained pain in the middle of the day.

Find a Doctor

If you’re new to the area or just looking for a new doctor, call us. Our staff will give you information on health care providers as well as outpatient and hospital services available throughout our area. For help finding a doctor, visit: www.affinityhealth.org/doctor.

Certification Regulations

Mental Health (depression, anxiety, panic, post traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit and/or hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, etc.)

- _____ 1. Provide a copy of a recent medical evaluation from your treating provider of the current status of your mental health.
- _____ 2. Include evaluation whether or not your condition, treatment and medications are compatible with safe performance of commercial driving duties, including working irregular hours.

To speed your medical certification process, please hand-carry your medical information to your appointment, or sign a release of information at your providers office requesting that they fax us the information before your DOT exam.

Fatigue

Some ways to prevent fatigue include:

- **Get plenty of sleep before a long trip.** You need 8 hours every day.
- **Reduce caffeine intake.** Cut back to only a couple of servings a day to see if you have less “rebound” fatigue. Avoid high caffeine energy drinks like Red Bull, Monster, etc. You get a “jolt”, but you pay a price once it wears off.
- **Eat a well balanced diet.** See the nutrition section of this pamphlet.
- **Exercise regularly.** Poor physical conditioning may cause your fatigue. Building your stamina will help. First see your primary care provider before starting a new fitness program. See the exercise section of this pamphlet.
- **Reduce excess weight.** The extra pounds you carry may cause your fatigue.
- **Avoid drinking alcohol.** Alcohol depresses body and brain function like a drug, causing fatigue and lethargy the next day. It especially disturbs sleep if taken near bedtime.
- **Stop smoking and chewing tobacco.** See the tobacco cessation section of this pamphlet.
- **Manage your time and stress.** Procrastinating or trying to do too much with too little time increases stress. Balance your time. Keep a list of tasks and set goal dates for each.
- **Find time to use a proven relaxation technique.** Try deep breathing, stretching, “easy listening” music, praying, or taking a mid-day walk.

Sleep Apnea

Staying awake means staying alive. Sleep apnea causes dangerous fatigue and daytime drowsiness. The condition comes from repeated narrowing or closure of the upper airway in bed. This disrupts sleep over and over, making it low-quality. Most people remain unaware of the sleep disturbance and have no memory of these brief awakenings. They may not even recognize how drowsy they have become. Over time, sleep apnea can also cause:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Personality changes
- Irritability
- Lack of energy
- Depression
- Cardiac arrhythmia
- High blood pressure
- Heart failure
- Stroke
- Worsening obesity

A recent study found that 18 percent of commercial truck drivers have mild sleep apnea, 6 percent have moderate sleep apnea, and 5 percent have it severely.

Bed partners of people with sleep apnea often notice:

- excessively loud snoring, often with long pauses in breathing
- snorting during sleep, gasping or choking noises
- frequent nighttime body movements
- twitches and kicks

If you or your bed partner think you may have a problem like this, see your health provider! Sleep apnea usually responds very well to treatment. In most cases, Nasal CPAP, a device that maintains air flow in the throat, relieves the condition by preventing collapse of the airway during sleep.

Successfully treated, sleep apnea does not disqualify a driver. But, untreated sleep apnea will cause disqualification. Worse than that, untreated sleep apnea threatens the lives of professional drivers and the public.

Certification Regulations

We want your DOT Federal Medical Exam to go smoothly. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association writes the rules, not you and not us. You can meet these exam requirements more efficiently with less delay in getting your Fed Med Card if you come prepared. **If you have any of the conditions listed below**, please obtain the following medical information and bring to your recertification appointments:

Diabetes

- ___ 1. Blood test results of **Hemoglobin A1c** within the past 3 months.
- ___ 2. A copy of a recent medical evaluation from your health care provider regarding diabetes treatment and control, including any high or low blood sugar reactions, and any complications such as heart, kidney, eye or nerve damage.
- ___ 3. Full list of medications.
- ___ 4. Report from your eye care provider of your annual diabetic eye exam.

Heart (heart attack, angioplasty, stents, heart failure, arrhythmia, surgery)

- ___ 1. A copy of a recent (within past year) evaluation from your cardiologist or the provider who manages your condition regarding treatment of your blood pressure and/or heart condition, including medication tolerance and control.
- ___ 2. Copy of most recent **EKG, Stress Test, Echocardiogram** or other heart test (should be within at least the past 2 years for most heart conditions).

Vision

Your job depends upon having good vision. See an eye care provider for routine checkups, even if you don't need glasses or contacts. Follow this rule of thumb: go 2 times in your 20's, 3 times in your 30's, 4 times in your 40's, then every year after 50. And, if you have diabetes, go at least yearly no matter your age. This helps ensure you will come to your DOT exam with good enough vision to pass.

And, your eye care professional can screen for conditions like glaucoma which could slowly and silently rob you of your vision. Fortunately glaucoma responds to treatment, such as prescription eye drops, if found early. That may save your eyesight and your job.

Always have a spare pair of glasses and/or contacts with you in the truck in case you lose or damage the pair you are wearing. You may break the law if you try to drive with one lens missing!

Blood Pressure

DOT medical examiners follow these guidelines from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration:

If you have systolic BP (top number) 140-159 and/or diastolic BP (bottom number) 90-99, you will get a card for one year only. If you still have blood pressure higher than 140/90 at next year's exam, the card gets extended only once, and only for three months, until you have blood pressure lower than 140/90. You can then get yearly certification if it stays down.

If you have systolic BP 160-179 and/or diastolic BP 100-109, you will get a one-time card that gives you three months to reduce your BP below 140/90. BP that high usually needs prescription medicine. Once your BP stays 140/90 or less, you get a card lasting one year from the date of the exam, and yearly cards thereafter.

If you have systolic BP higher than 180 and/or diastolic BP higher than 110, you no longer qualify for certification until you lower your BP to 140/90 or less. Then you can get six month cards by keeping it low.

Nutrition

Good nutrition starts with good preparation. A planned snack or meal prevents you from feeling deprived and hungry, two feelings that may contribute to poor eating. In order to prepare well, you need to know what to look for when reading food labels.

Nearly all foods come with "Nutrition Facts". Use food labels to make healthy decisions.

Calories – Keep meals to around 600 calories or less and snacks to around 200 calories or less. Eat every 3 hours or so to avoid overeating.

Serving Size – Does the serving size match what you will eat? If you wind up eating eight crackers, but the serving size shows two, you would have eaten four times that amount of calories shown per serving. If you eat twenty crackers, it would be ten times as many calories. Count out what you will eat before you start eating it!

Fat – Eliminate or cut down on saturated and trans fat.

Sugar – Limit sugar. Choose foods and drinks that have less than 15 grams of sugar. Soda contains an astounding 40 – 50 grams.

Snacking seems to go hand-in-hand with trucking. Like all foods, there are healthy snacks and unhealthy snacks.

Here are healthy snacks to consider bringing on the job:

- Dry cereal
- Yogurt
- Seeds/nuts
- Fresh fruit
- Peanut butter on whole grain bread
- String cheese
- Lightly buttered popcorn
- Beef jerky
- Dried fruit
- Granola bars
- Pretzels
- Baked chips
- Cut vegetables
- Breakfast bars
- Whole grain crackers

Nutrition

Whether snacking or having a sit down meal, Americans struggle with controlling portion sizes. Food advertising and packaging feeds into the problem. Think back to the days when a soda meant a can. Now we mistakenly think of the standard size of soda as a twenty-four ounce bottle - twice the size and twice the calories! Take the time to read the serving sizes on food labels to see just how much “portion distortion” confronts us.

Here are tips to control your portions:

- Never eat out of a bag or carton. Choose a small bowl or plate.
- Fill up on larger portions of low calorie food.
- Store food out of sight. Cookies or desserts placed out in the open, spell trouble.
- Avoid having serving dishes on the table. It encourages unnecessary seconds.
- Break away from the Clean Plate Syndrome. Stop before you feel full.
- Eat light and often, every 3-4 hours.
- Remember to prepare healthy snacks for your day or your trip. Munching healthy snacks fends off cravings.

When eating at a fast food restaurant, consider these tips:

- Never have the deluxe sandwiches. Eat a regular hamburger instead. Have them add tomato and lettuce – a bargain deluxe!
- Never “super size” your food.
- Never drink soda with fast food. Have water or coffee.
- Try a salad. The side salads at fast food restaurants are full of taste.
- All chicken sandwiches are not the same. Stick with grilled chicken, avoid breaded or fried.
- Ask for the nutritional facts sheet.

Call It Quits

Affinity’s Call It Quits Telephone Coaching Program: Are you looking for freedom from tobacco? Just like driving to any destination, you need to know the route. A navigator helps. Affinity’s FREE telephone coaching program aids anyone from our service area on their journey toward tobacco freedom. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, our coaches will help you:

1. Understand your tobacco problem
2. Assess your readiness to quit
3. Develop a personalized plan
4. Get a FREE interactive workbook
5. Find 24/7 support

If you belong to Network Health Plan, you could receive up to \$400 in reimbursement for nicotine replacement products or quit tobacco prescriptions. Contact Network Health Plan at 1-800-826-0940 to check for eligibility.

Keys to Quitting

Get Ready

- Set a quit date with enough lead time to prepare. Stick to that date!
- Think about past attempts at quitting. What worked and what didn't?
- What causes you to light up? Make plans to defeat each trigger.
- Have your plan in place, then QUIT!

Explore Personal Reasons for Wanting to Quit

- Remember what motivates you to want to quit.
- Make a list of benefits from quitting to which you are looking forward.
- Review these reasons daily.

Support, Support, and SUPPORT!

- Let friends, family, and coworkers know you are trying to quit. Ask them for support.
- Join a tobacco cessation program such as *Affinity Call It Quits*. Every state has a telephone support line at 1-800-QUITNOW.
- Talk with your doctor. Make sure they know you drive professionally. Getting the right method and dosage of medications for you is crucial in the quit process.

Use a Multi-Pronged Approach

- Use all available resources including support programs and classes, medications, educational materials, and your physician.
- You can get nicotine replacement products (NRT) either over the counter or with a physician prescription. These slowly replace the nicotine your brain craves while you ease away from tobacco addiction. These come in several forms: patch, gum, lozenge, nasal spray, and inhaler.
- Bupropion SR (Zyban) and Chantix are medications your doctor might order to help you with the cravings of nicotine. Make sure your doctor knows you drive professionally if considering these.

Exercise

“If exercise could be purchased in a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and most beneficial medicine in the nation.”

- Robert H. Butler

Add exercise to your life to improve your weight, sleep, cholesterol blood pressure, physical and mental health. Exercise lowers your risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Exercising will make it easier to complete your everyday tasks.

Follow the **FITT Principle** to get the most out of your cardiovascular exercise program.

Frequency – Any physical activity is better than none and more is better than some. Exercise most days of the week, enough to get lightly sweaty.

Intensity – One intensity is not necessarily better than another. Find the intensity that feels right for you. Even light activity, like walking, has tremendous benefit if done regularly.

Type – The best forms are those you enjoy and will stick with. Alternate between types you like best, to keep your motivation high and risk for injury low. Most people like walking for fitness. Skipping rope is a good choice for some commercial drivers, since you can do it anywhere and store the rope easily.

Time – Exercise at least 20 minutes per day. If pressed for time, split these 20 minute sessions into two shorter ones. Remember that little walks can add up to great benefits especially in terms of weight loss. In fact, obese people burn 40% more calories when walking than do people with ideal body weights. After fueling your vehicle, walk around the truck plaza for 5-10 minutes. Just 32 laps around a big rig makes a mile! If able, walk outside your vehicle after your deliveries. These walks of just 5-10 minutes can add to a 20-40 minute workout by day's end.

Exercise

Adding strength training will help maintain and increase your lean muscle. The more lean muscle mass you have, the more calories you burn throughout the day. Better strength also helps prevent injury and makes daily tasks easier. Strength training can consist of using weights, machines, bands, or even your own body weight. Sit-ups and push-ups are just as effective as other strength training exercises and can be done anywhere.

Many people forget to include stretching in their routines. It helps you feel better immediately, so don't forget to do flexibility exercises. Professional drivers often complain of tightness in the low back, neck and shoulders. Taking a few minutes each day to stretch out the tight areas of your body will keep you feeling limber. Stretching will also invigorate you and can prove to be a great mid-day break. Most importantly, regular stretching will decrease your risk for injury. Remember to hold your stretch for approximately 15 seconds and never bounce.

Tobacco Cessation

You can quit tobacco. You know you want to!

Thinking of Quitting?

- See it as a journey, not just a destination.
- Many people try two or three times before they quit for good.
- Each time you try to quit the odds of success increases. You learn lessons from each attempt.

Benefits of Quitting

- You will live longer and healthier.
- The people you live with, especially your children, will be healthier.
- You will have more energy and breathe easier.
- You will lower your risk of heart attack, stroke and cancer.
- You will have whiter teeth and healthier gums.
- Other people will notice that you look and smell better.
- You will have more money to spend on other things you enjoy.

Tips to Help You Quit

- Get rid of all cigarettes/chew in your home, car or workplace.
- Ask your family, friends, and coworkers for support.
- Stay in tobacco-free areas.
- Breathe deeply when you feel the urge to smoke.
- Identify your triggers and create a plan on how to cope without using tobacco.

Quit and Save Yourself Money

- At over \$7 a pack, a pack-a-day costs \$2,600 each year.
- Remind yourself what you could do every year with that savings!