

Drivers: Start Living Heart-Healthy Today

With long hours spent sitting in a cab, little opportunity to exercise, few healthy food choices and large amounts of stress, driving a truck brings many challenges. Staying heart healthy may be one of the biggest ones.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), heart disease causes more than 655,000 deaths in the U.S. each year. Unfortunately, truck drivers face some of the highest risks. And heart disease affects driving performance. A [2016 study](#) showed that truck drivers with a high risk of heart disease were also more likely to be involved in a crash.

February is American Heart Month, so it's a great time to take steps now to improve your heart health. Follow this two-step process:

First, know your risk factors. You are at a higher risk for a heart attack or heart disease if you:

- Have a family history
- Are a man older than 45
- Are a woman past menopause
- Smoke
- Have high cholesterol
- Have high blood pressure
- Aren't physically active
- Are obese
- Have diabetes
- Drink too much alcohol
- Have a poor diet
- Have high stress levels

Next, take steps to reverse your risk factors.

Staying heart healthy takes commitment. You can start now by making small steps today to reduce your risk factors.

Quit smoking. It's not easy, but it's worth it. Websites like [Smokefree.gov](#) offer great tips, as does the free [quitSTART app](#) from the CDC.



Many states offer free nicotine replacement therapy to help you deal with cravings. Even if you can't quit, cutting back on the number of cigarettes you smoke a day will bring health benefits.

Walk around. Start by stretching and taking short walks around your truck before and after your drive and while you're on breaks. Bonus points if you can do sit-ups or pushups.

Pack healthy food in your truck. Quit the truck stop habit. Carry healthy snacks such as almonds, apples, bananas, dark chocolate, oranges and energy bars. If you have a mini fridge in your truck, stock it with pre-cut vegetables, hard boiled eggs, cheese sticks and other heart-healthy options.

Control your stress. Free smartphone apps like Calm and Headspace offer meditation and other exercises to reduce your stress levels and help you get the sleep your heart needs each night.

See your doctor. If you don't know your cholesterol, blood pressure or blood sugar levels, make an appointment with a healthcare provider to get bloodwork. Knowing your numbers will give you a plan to help your heart.