



# ROADSIDEREADER

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TRUCKERS

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### THE ROAD TAKES A TOLL

Protect your back, neck, and joints for the long haul

Long-haul truck drivers face a steady risk of back, neck, and joint pain from hours of sitting, whole-body vibration, poor posture, repeated climbing, and handling freight. Small adjustments can reduce that strain.

Movement and safer lifting matter just as much. Drivers should walk and stretch during breaks, strengthen the muscles that support the back and joints, keep loads close to the body, avoid twisting while carrying, and use tools or help for heavy freight. Climbing down with three points of contact instead of jumping can also protect the knees, hips, ankles, and back. Persistent pain, numbness, weakness, or pain that travels into an arm or leg should be checked by a medical provider.

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### The Highway is Long

Your health plan can be simple

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### Running on Empty

Here is why truckers cannot outride fatigue



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### 20 RANDOM FACTS

You'll be surprised at these factoids + Sudoku



# Truckers Healthcare is becoming **LongHaul Direct**

For years, NAIT members and independent truckers have turned to Truckers Healthcare for help reviewing insurance options and connecting with licensed agents. The road ahead begins with a name that better reflects what we do and the people we serve.



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## BETTER CHOICES FOR THE LONG HAUL

Simple steps today can lower your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other serious health problems.

- MOVE MORE**  
Take short walks, stretch, and stay active during breaks.
- EAT SMART**  
Choose balanced meals, more fruits and vegetables, and less salt, sugar, and fried foods.
- KNOW YOUR NUMBERS**  
Check your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight regularly.
- TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEART**  
Small daily choices add up to a healthier, longer life on the road.

# The Long Road to Better Heart Health

A long-haul driver may spend most of the day watching mile markers pass without taking more than a few hundred steps. Meals come when the schedule allows. Healthy choices may be scarce, while fried food, sugary drinks, and oversized portions seem to be everywhere.

Over time, that routine can take a toll. Long-haul truck drivers have higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity than other U.S. workers, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The problem is not a lack of toughness. It is a job built around sitting, stress, irregular schedules, and limited access to healthy food.

The good news is that protecting your heart does not require a gym membership or a perfect diet. It begins with small decisions repeated day after day and stop after stop.

Start by breaking up the sitting. A 10-minute walk around the parking lot before getting back behind the wheel can help. So can a few minutes of body-weight squats, wall pushups, calf raises, or resistance-band work beside the truck.

The long-term target for most adults is at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week, along with muscle-strengthening activity twice a week. Those minutes do not have to happen in one long workout. Three 10-minute walks during the day add up to 30 minutes. Even light movement is better than remaining seated through every break.

Food planning matters just as much. A cooler stocked before the run can keep hunger from making every decision. Water, unsweetened drinks, fruit, vegetables, yogurt, boiled eggs, lean meat, nuts, and whole-grain wraps provide better options within arm's reach.

At restaurants, look for grilled food, vegetables, beans, and smaller portions. Skip the automatic refill. One heavy meal does not ruin a health plan, but a heavy meal at every stop can become the plan.

Sodium also deserves attention. Packaged meats, chips, canned foods, fast food, and many restaurant meals can deliver large amounts of salt. Eating less sodium and choosing more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean proteins can help control blood pressure. The DASH eating plan promoted by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute follows that basic approach.

Drivers should also know their numbers. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and prediabetes can develop without obvious warning. Regular medical visits and recommended checks for blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight can uncover trouble before it becomes an emergency.

A driver already being treated for a health condition should follow the prescribed plan rather than skipping medicine or appointments because the route is busy.

Progress does not have to look dramatic. Replacing one soda with water matters. Walking during one fuel stop matters. Packing tomorrow's breakfast tonight matters.

The road may control where a driver eats, sleeps, and stops. It does not have to control every health decision. A handful of better choices, made consistently, can protect the heart, steady blood sugar, and help keep a driver healthy enough to stay behind the wheel.





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## REST FOR THE LONG HAUL

Better sleep can lower the risk of fatigue, daytime drowsiness, and serious health problems on the road.



### PROTECT SLEEP TIME

Aim for 7 to 9 hours when possible and treat off-duty time like recovery time.



### KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Heavy eyes, yawning, missed exits, drifting, and trouble focusing mean it is time to stop and rest.



### WATCH FOR SLEEP APNEA

Loud snoring, morning headaches, and daytime drowsiness can be signs to talk with a medical provider.



### BUILD A BETTER SLEEP ROUTINE

Keep the sleeper dark, cool, and quiet. Limit late caffeine and reduce screen time before bed.



## RUNNING ON EMPTY: You Cannot Outdrive Fatigue

Sleep is easy to treat like lost time when the appointment clock is running, traffic is stacking up, and the next safe parking space may be miles away.

For long-haul truck drivers, however, rest is not downtime. It is safety equipment.

Irregular schedules, overnight driving, loading delays, stress, and sleeping away from home can make quality rest difficult. Fatigue can slow reaction time, weaken judgment, and make it harder to notice hazards developing ahead. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration reported that 13 percent of commercial drivers in its Large Truck Crash Causation Study were fatigued at the time of the crash.

The first defense is to protect enough time for sleep before the truck moves. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that most working-age adults get at least 7 hours of sleep daily, while NIOSH advises drivers to aim for 7 to 9 hours. A legal off-duty period does not automatically guarantee adequate sleep if much of that time is spent eating, showering, doing laundry, talking with family, or searching for parking.

Drivers can improve the sleep they do get by treating the sleeper berth like a bedroom. Make it dark, quiet, and cool. Silence notifications, use curtains or an eye mask, and reduce screen time before lying down. Keep a sleep routine as consistent as the route allows. Large meals, alcohol, and late caffeine can also interfere with rest.



Whenever possible, drivers should also plan around the body's natural low points. FMCSA identifies midnight to 6 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. as periods when drowsiness is more likely to increase.

Drivers should learn their warning signs. Frequent yawning, heavy eyes, blurred vision, missed exits, or drifting within the lane mean it is time to act — not time to turn up the radio. Opening a window, smoking, loud music, and other “alertness tricks” do not cure fatigue. FMCSA advises drivers who become drowsy to pull over in a safe place and rest. NIOSH says a cup of coffee followed by a 15- to 30-minute nap may provide temporary help, but sleep remains the only real cure.

Persistent tiredness may signal more than a rough schedule. Sleep apnea repeatedly interrupts breathing during sleep, robbing the body of restorative rest. FMCSA says almost one-third of commercial drivers may have some degree of the disorder. Warning signs include loud snoring, gasping or choking during sleep, morning headaches, trouble concentrating, and excessive daytime sleepiness.

Those symptoms should not be ignored or hidden. A medical provider can arrange testing, and treatment may include lifestyle changes, an oral appliance, or continuous positive airway pressure therapy. CPAP equipment is portable and can travel in the truck. Properly treated drivers can generally work as safely as drivers without sleep apnea.

A load can be rescheduled. A fatigued driver cannot rewind the last mile. Protecting sleep, recognizing drowsiness, and getting treatment when something feels wrong are not signs of weakness. They are part of running safely for the long haul.

*WHERE  
is Gizmo?*



This summer, keep your eyes peeled for Gizmo, NAIT's furry mascot. He'll be out on the road, wagging his way across the miles. Spot him? Don't paws – snap a pic, send it our way!

[mona.brimeyer@naitusa.com](mailto:mona.brimeyer@naitusa.com)



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## PROTECT YOUR BACK FOR THE LONG HAUL

Better posture, regular movement, and safer lifting can help reduce back, neck, and joint pain on the road.

- 
**ADJUST YOUR SEAT**  
 Keep your back supported, knees slightly bent, and mirrors positioned to reduce twisting.
- 
**MOVE AT EVERY STOP**  
 Walk, stretch, and loosen your shoulders, hips, and hamstrings during breaks.
- 
**LIFT SMART**  
 Keep the load close, avoid twisting, and use tools or help for heavy freight.
- 
**CLIMB DOWN SAFELY**  
 Use three points of contact and step down carefully instead of jumping from the cab.

## Aches at the End of the Road

A long-haul driver can feel every mile by the end of a run.

The lower back tightens. The neck stiffens. A knee complains after another climb into the cab. Sometimes the pain fades after a night's rest. Sometimes it follows the driver into the next week, the next load, and eventually every part of the day.

Driving is physical work, even when most of it is done sitting down. Hours in one position, repeated jolts from the road, whole-body vibration, awkward reaching, and loading or securing freight can place steady stress on muscles, joints, and the spine. NIOSH research has linked long-term whole-body vibration among professional drivers with low-back problems, especially when vibration combines with prolonged sitting, lifting, and awkward posture.

The first line of defense is the driver's seat. Before pulling out, adjust it so the pedals can be reached without stretching and the knees remain slightly bent. Sit close enough to the wheel that the shoulders stay against the seat instead of rolling forward. Keep the back supported, the hips level, and the mirrors positioned so checking traffic does not require repeated twisting.

Seat suspension matters, too. A poorly adjusted or worn seat can pass more shock into the body. NIOSH advises drivers to learn the seat's controls, adjust it for comfort, visibility, and access to the controls, and readjust it during the shift when necessary. Maintenance problems that increase jolting or vibration should be reported rather than simply endured.



Movement during breaks can help keep stiffness from setting in. A few minutes of walking, gentle trunk rotations, shoulder rolls, calf raises, and hip or hamstring stretches can break up hours of sitting. Drivers should move within a comfortable range and avoid forcing a painful joint.

Regular walking and strength work for the legs, hips, abdomen, back, shoulders, and arms can also help prepare the body for the demands of the job. CDC guidance recommends muscle-strengthening activity at least two days each week.

Freight handling deserves the same attention as driving. Plan the lift before touching the load. Clear the path, get close to the object, keep it near the body, and avoid twisting while carrying it. Turn with the feet instead. When a load is bulky, unstable, or simply too heavy, use a cart, liftgate, pallet jack, or another person.

Climbing down from the cab can be another trouble spot. Maintain three points of contact, face the truck, and step down instead of jumping. One hard landing can punish the ankles, knees, hips, and back.

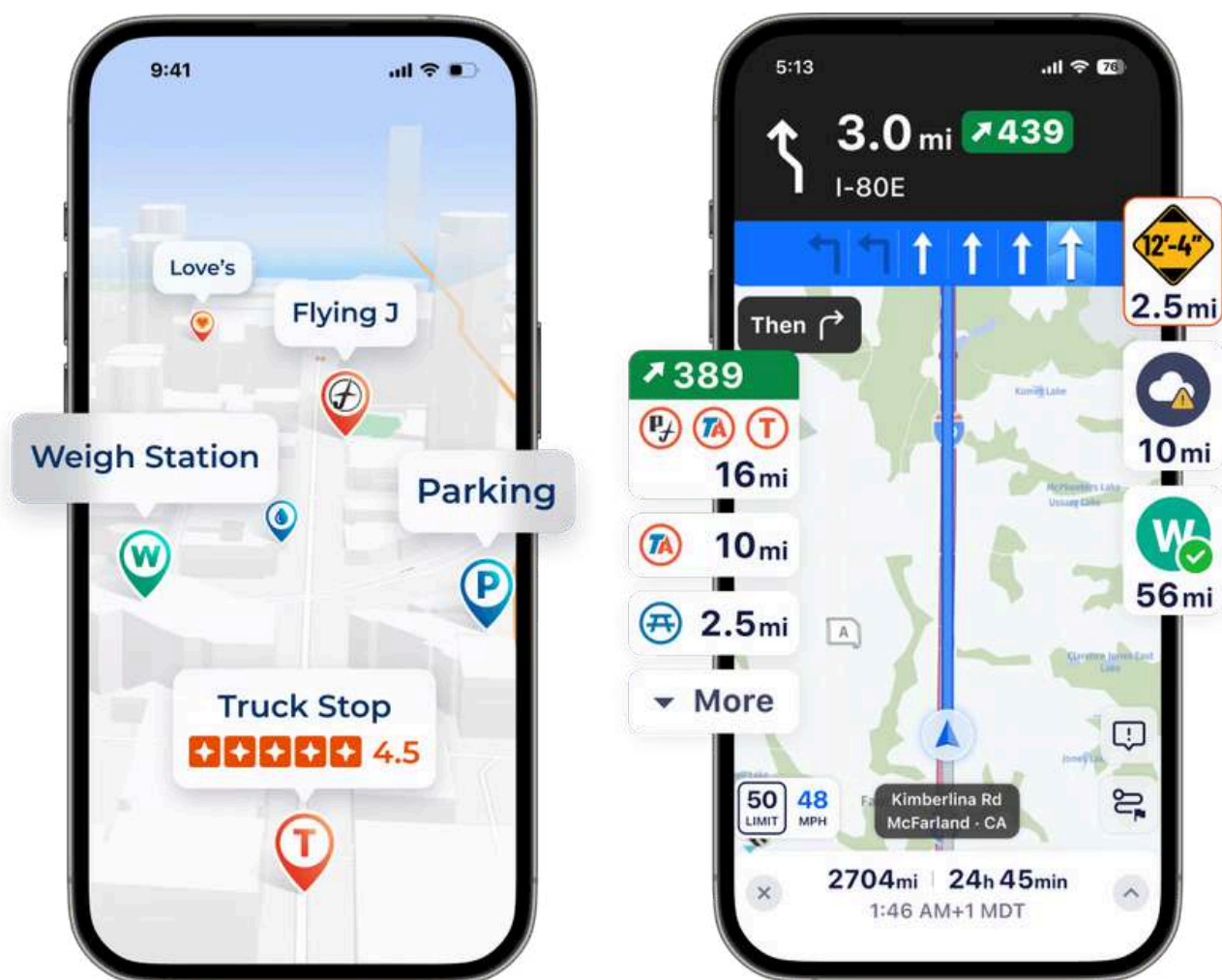
Pain is information. Persistent pain, pain traveling into a leg or arm, or symptoms that interfere with sleep or work deserve medical attention. Seek prompt care for numbness, weakness, loss of movement, or bowel or bladder changes.

Truckers cannot smooth every road or lighten every load. They can adjust the seat, move at each stop, lift smarter, and pay attention before a nagging ache becomes an injury that takes them off the road.



NAIT members now have access to Trucker Path's full suite of navigation and planning tools at a **20% discount!** For assistance, onboarding, and to access your special members' discount, contact Mona Brimeyer at (877) 770-6248 or email Mona at [MemberBenefits@NAITUSA.com](mailto:MemberBenefits@NAITUSA.com)

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|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | 1 | 9 | 5 |   | 7 |   | 3 |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   |
|   |   | 2 |   |   |   | 7 | 6 | 5 |
|   |   | 7 |   |   |   | 1 |   |   |
| 9 | 5 |   | 8 |   | 4 | 3 |   |   |
|   | 2 |   |   |   | 1 | 5 |   | 4 |
|   |   |   |   |   | 6 | 2 |   | 3 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5 |   |
|   | 6 |   |   | 4 |   |   | 8 | 1 |

## Sudoku

The goal is to fill a 9x9 grid with digits 1 through 9, ensuring each digit appears only once in each row, column, and 3x3 subgrid.

## 20 Random Facts

- Octopuses have three hearts and blue blood.
- Bananas are berries, but strawberries are not.
- A group of flamingos is called a flamboyance.
- Honey can remain edible for thousands of years when properly sealed.
- Wombat droppings are cube-shaped.
- The Eiffel Tower can grow about 6 inches taller during hot weather because metal expands.
- Sharks existed before trees.
- A day on Venus is longer than a year on Venus.
- Sea otters sometimes hold hands while sleeping so they do not drift apart.
- The dot above a lowercase i or j is called a tittle.
- Cows have close companions and can become stressed when separated from them.
- The shortest recorded war lasted less than an hour: the Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896.
- Some turtles can breathe through specialized tissues near their rear ends.
- The human body contains enough iron to make a small nail.
- A snail can have thousands of microscopic teeth.
- The inventor of the Pringles can had some of his ashes buried in one.
- Ravens can mimic human speech and other sounds.
- Scotland's national animal is the unicorn.
- The smell that follows rain is called petrichor.
- A cloud can weigh more than a million pounds, even though it floats in the sky.