Hirschbach
Driver Wellness Program
HIRSCHBACH DRIVERS HAVE REPORTED GREAT RESULTS FROM THIS PROGRAM

Last year, Hirschbach Motor Lines offered a pilot program in wellness and vitality to about 25 drivers. These are some of the comments from drivers who participated in the program.

“I have lost 40 pounds and expect to keep losing. I’m exercising and staying hydrated. I couldn’t be more appreciative of what this program has done for me.”

“One of the best things I have ever done for myself. And for my family.”

“I have always been a high energy person, but now I have more than ever. The whole program helped, but I think drinking water and breathing better were the biggest things. The more water I drank, the better I felt.”

“I thought that bad sleep and feeling tired a lot of the time was just part of being a truck driver. I used some simple ideas from this program and I'm sleeping so much better now.”

“The active listening skills surprised me. I tried it with my wife and we appreciated it together. When I am on the phone with her, we practice it.”

“I didn’t think drinking water would be better than coffee or energy drinks for keeping me alert. The results were plain amazing. The more water I drank, the more energy I had and the better I felt.”

“Breathing right makes me feel better all the time.” . . . “The breathing helps me wake up. I feel more energetic in the morning.” . . . “I use it to go to sleep. I feel relaxed and calm.” . . . “I now use it at home. I am less crabby with my kids. I just start diaphragmatic breathing and calm myself. My wife and kids have noticed it and I am teaching them to do it.”

“I changed my diet 180 degrees. Cut out sodas and started eating healthy. I’m not as stressed and I have a lot more energy.”

“I started out with some very basic things. Walking, simple stretching, even just wiggling my fingers and toes. Reminding myself that I have a body that has to be taken care of. Now I’m really into it, and I am feeling so much better.”

YOUR JOURNEY TO WELLNESS AND VITALITY BEGINS HERE
DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

You can watch the Hirschbach video about diaphragmatic breathing here.

Diaphragmatic breathing (also called abdominal breathing, belly breathing, or deep breathing) is breathing that is done by contracting and expanding the diaphragm, a muscle located between the chest cavity and the abdomen.

Most of us breathe most of the time with our chest moving, not our diaphragm, and often we breathe in shallow breaths. Diaphragmatic breathing gets more air into the lungs.

What Hirschbach Drivers Have Said About Diaphragmatic Breathing

Hirschbach drivers who participated in a pilot wellness program said these things about diaphragmatic breathing:

▸ “Breathing right makes me feel better all the time. I could not believe that it would make this much of a difference!”

▸ “I’m not a morning person, but the breathing helps me wake up. I feel more energetic in the morning.”

▸ “I use it to go to sleep. I feel relaxed and calm. I use it every time I go to sleep.”

▸ “When I get tired in the late afternoon, I practice my breathing while driving. I get re-energized and am less sleepy.”

▸ “When I get into difficult situations in traffic, the breathing exercise really helps. I focus on the breathing and feel much more alert. It
has surprised me that I feel like a safer driver because I am so much more aware and awake than I was before.”

▶ “When I’m waiting to load I practice my breathing sitting in the truck. The time goes faster and I am less annoyed by the waiting.”

▶ “I was in the band in high school, and I learned diaphragmatic breathing then. I have reintroduced it into my life and I use it all the time now. I feel so much more awake all the time.”

▶ “I now use it at home on my home time. I am less crabby with my kids. I just start diaphragmatic breathing and calm myself. My wife and kids have noticed it and I am teaching them to do it.”

**Health Benefits**

The health-related benefits associated with diaphragmatic breathing include:

♦ Stress reduction  ♦ Relaxation  ♦ Increased calm energy

Medical conditions that may benefit from the positive effects of diaphragmatic breathing include:

- High blood pressure  - Stomach conditions  - COPD  
- Headaches  - Depression  - Asthma  
- Diabetes  - Anxiety

**Doing Diaphragmatic Breathing**

When you inhale, let your belly expand. When you exhale, pull in your belly to push the air out. That’s all there is to it.
Learning and Practicing Diaphragmatic Breathing

This way of breathing might be harder for you at first than you think it will be, particularly if you have not used your stomach muscles much. You can start slowly and work up to become really comfortable with it.

You can see a very short video about how to practice [here](#).

In essence:

Place one hand on your belly just below the ribs and the other hand on your chest. You can do this while standing, but it may be more comfortable while you are laying on the floor or in bed with your knees bent. If you place a book under the hand on your belly, you will feel the rising and falling of your abdomen more fully.

Take a deep breath through your nose. As you inhale, let your belly push your hand out. Keep your chest still and do not raise your shoulders.

As you exhale, feel the hand on your belly go down. Use that hand to help you push all the air out. Take your time exhaling.

*Be careful that you do not tighten, raise, or hunch your shoulders.* Some drivers practice as they are sitting with their seatbelt on so they are more likely to notice those kinds of movements. Practicing while laying on the floor or in bed greatly reduces the likelihood of undesired shoulder movements.
As you gain more practice, you can try the diaphragmatic breathing technique while sitting in a chair. Keep your knees bent and your head and neck relaxed, and place one hand on your chest and one on your belly.

**Remembering to Breathe**

As you can see from the examples from Hirschbach drivers, there are many times when you can use this breathing method, from when you get up in the morning to when you go to sleep at night, and from when you are stressed to when you have down time.

But if you, like most people, have developed shallow “chest breathing” as a habit, you will have to pay attention to changing that. Here are three ways to make diaphragmatic breathing more of a habit:

- **✓** Practice three or four times every day, for 5-10 minutes at a time.
- **✓** Do it each day when you get up in the morning and when you are going to sleep at night.
- **✓** Use Post-It Notes or some other method to remind yourself. Put notes where you will see them—on your dashboard, for example, or on your cell phone.

As you do more diaphragmatic breathing, and experience the benefits, it becomes a new habit for you that replaces your old breathing habits.
HYDRATION

You can watch the Hirschbach video about hydration here.

Staying hydrated—having the proper amount of water in your body—is an important part of overall health.

Some things Hirschbach drivers have said about staying hydrated:

“I tried it, but I didn’t think it would be better than coffee or energy drinks for keeping me alert. The results were plain amazing. The more water I drank, the more energy I had and the better I felt.”

“Now that I’ve seen how good it is for me to drink more water, I won’t go a day without 64 ounces.”

In a study using a simulator, truck drivers who were mildly dehydrated made the same number of errors as drivers with a 0.8% blood alcohol level — twice as many driving errors as those who were fully hydrated. The errors included lane drifting, late braking, and touching or crossing the rumble strip or center line.

How being properly hydrated is good for you:

- Directly related to heart health, since your heart pumps blood more easily when you are properly hydrated.
- Maintains muscular coordination.
- Keeps mental focus sharp.
- Lubricates and cushions your joints.
- Protects your spinal cord and other sensitive tissues.
- Gets rid of wastes through urination, perspiration, and bowel movements.

Indicators of Dehydration

Being thirsty is an indicator that you are dehydrated, but by the time you feel thirsty, you are probably already dehydrated. It is important to hydrate before you feel thirsty.
The best overall indicator of dehydration is the color of your urine. Pale and clear means you’re well hydrated. If it’s dark, you need to drink more fluids.

Other indicators include a dry, sticky mouth; fatigue; dry skin; dizziness or lightheadedness; and decreased urination.

**Tips for Staying Hydrated**

- Drinking plenty of water is the best way to avoid dehydration. 8 cups (64 ounces) per day is the recommended amount.
- Drink water even when you are not thirsty.
- If you perspire heavily will need to drink more water than someone who doesn’t. If you are driving in hot weather or at high altitudes, you should drink more water. Certain medical conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, may also mean you need to drink more water.
- Alcohol and caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea, and soft drinks, are not good sources of water because they tend to pull water from the body and promote dehydration.
- Start your day with a hydrating drink instead of coffee, for example, a combination of water, lemon juice, and cayenne pepper.
- To reduce the issue of inconvenient need to urinate, time your water drinking with expected stops. For example, drink two 16-ounce quantities of water 20 to 30 minutes before arriving at the day’s first stop; and the same amount before the last stop.
- Eat fruits and raw vegetables, because they are generally high in water content.
- Liven up your water by adding a squeeze of lemon, lime, or berries. You can also use vegetables such as cucumber or celery, or herbs such as basil, mint, or lavender. To see 27 fruit-infused water possibilities, click here.
- Try sparkling water or mineral water for a change of pace.
- If you feel that you must drink sugary drinks such as colas and lemonade, dilute them with water.
- Use a smartphone app to track your water consumption and set reminders. Here are links to two apps: [Daily Water Free](#) and [Carbobdroid](#).
Use a marked water bottle, such as this 32-ounce water intake tracker bottle. Or make your own, similar to this one:

Reminder: You can watch the Hirschbach video about hydration here.
CONSCIOUS EATING

You can watch the Hirschbach video about conscious eating here.

Some things Hirschbach drivers have said about conscious eating:

“I ate a lot better, more healthy, from paying attention to what I was eating instead of gulping it down.”

“I don’t think I ever actually tasted my food before, at least not ninety percent of the time. I look forward to eating things that are good for me and really noticing how good-tasting they are.”

“Somehow, noticing what I ate and enjoying it more spilled over into other parts of my life, so now I am noticing things around me more, both good and bad. If I pass some beautiful scenery I appreciate it more. And if my cab has a funky smell, it bothers me more than it used to, so I clear it out. You could say I’m more alive and alert now.”

Why Conscious Eating Matters

In another section of this manual you’ll find information about nutrition and specific ways to eat healthier meals. Click here to see that section. But at the heart of all lasting improvement in your diet is paying attention to what you actually eat. This is called conscious eating, or mindful eating.

When you eat with awareness, you get these benefits:

- Make better food choices
- Nutrients in food are absorbed better
- Eat less and enjoy it more
- Feel more restored from food
- Reduce diabetes symptoms
- Digest food better
- Appreciate life more
- Reduce stress

How It’s Done

For conscious eating, you might follow a process something like this, with whatever modifications make it most effective for you.

Eliminate any distraction you can—no video watching, computer typing, or radio listening. You might say a few words of appreciation for the food
you have in front of you, or you might take a while longer to deeply sense that appreciation and clear your mind of the day’s stresses and frustrations. Take a few deep breaths and relax. Look closely at what you are about to eat. Notice its colors, its shape, and its aroma. Take a small bite, and then put down the utensil you are using, or if you are eating with your hands, put down the food you are holding. Focus on the bite you are eating. Chew slowly and thoroughly (20-30 chews per bite is a good target). Close your eyes. Tune in to the texture of the food, and its flavor, and how those things change as you chew. Swallow. Think about what you just ate. Consider giving thanks to whatever provided that food to you. Continue your meal, eating in that way and with that feeling of gratitude. Notice anything your body might be telling you as you are eating.

**Conscious Eating Tips**

- Get started with conscious eating, even if it’s just once or twice a week at first.
- Don’t eat snacks from the bag or box they came in. It’s too easy to become unaware of what you’re doing. Measure out the portions you really can eat mindfully.
- Try eating with your non-dominant hand. If you’re right-handed, for example, use your fork or spoon with your left hand. You’ll find yourself noticing the act of eating more.
- Pretend you are a restaurant critic. Notice all the tastes in your food as though you were going to write a review of what you have just eaten.
- Designate a mindful snack. Find something healthy that you really love, and snack on that each day for a week or two. The fact that you enjoy it will help you create the habit of eating mindfully.
- Notice how much “autopilot” eating you do, not to support your body or to calm real hunger, but because you are anxious, bored, or stressed. Learn the situations in which you eat “unconsciously.”
- If you prepare your meals, do that with minfulness, too.
“The next time you have a tangerine to eat, please put it in the palm of your hand and look at it in a way that makes the tangerine real. You do not need a lot of time to do it, just two or three seconds. Looking at it, you can see a beautiful blossom with sunshine and rain, and you can see a tiny fruit forming. You can see the continuation of the sunshine and the rain, and the transformation of the baby fruit into the fully developed tangerine in your hand. You can see the color change from green to orange and you can see the tangerine sweetening. Looking at a tangerine in this way, you will see that everything in the cosmos is in it—sunshine, rain, clouds, trees, leaves, everything. Peeling the tangerine, smelling it, and tasting it, you can be very happy.” — Thich Nhat Hanh

Resources

The Center for Mindful Eating has many resources.

www.thecenterformindfuleating.org

A three-minute introductory video can be seen here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymIm2zxzG3U

Here are two articles about mindful eating:

“Why Mindful Eating Matters.” University of Minnesota


“Mindful Eating as Food for Thought.” New York Times


Reminder: You can watch the Hirschbach video about conscious eating here.

Conscious Eating
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MOVEMENT AND EXERCISE

You can watch some Hirschbach videos about movement and exercise here.

Some things Hirschbach drivers have said about movement and exercise:

“My day is just a big disappointment if I don’t get in some healthy activity. I feel better when I do, and I feel good about reducing the health risks that a driver faces.”

“Everyone knows that it’s hard for a driver to exercise as much as we should. But if you’re committed, you can find ways.”

“I started out with some very basic things. Walking, simple stretching, even just wiggling my fingers and toes. Reminding myself that I have a body that has to be taken care of. Now I’m really into it, and I am feeling so much better.”

Why Movement and Exercise Matter

In another section of this manual you’ll find specific information about how to get more movement and exercise into your life. Click here to see that section.

When you get more movement and exercise into your life, you are improving your health and making things better for yourself in many ways:

- Improving heart health
- Strengthening muscles, bones and joints
- Reducing stress
- Fighting illness and disease
- Helping manage your weight
- Counteracting depression and anxiety
- Promoting better sleep
- Increases endorphin production (happy hormone)
- Improving energy and reflexes
- Increasing overall vitality

Moving More

Research has shown that drivers are not overweight because of eating too many calories, which came as a surprise to us; it’s mainly due to too little movement/exercise, and a very slow metabolism. Regular exercise not only speeds up your metabolism, but also almost immediately improves your
energy, your quality of sleep (poor sleep quality slows metabolism), as well as improves your awareness and reflexes- a major plus for driver safety.

Motivation

Most people know how beneficial exercise is, yet still fail to do it on a regular basis. Drivers often say there’s no time, energy, or space to exercise, yet we’ve met dozens of drivers that find the time, energy and space to exercise regularly, so those can’t be the real reasons. It’s a matter of motivation. If you have the proper motivation, you will make the time, find the energy, and create the space to exercise. The right motivation also gets you past any fears of failure or embarrassment of exercises.

If you have not been very active, remember that some movement is better than none, so start moving more by doing anything that adds activity to your normal routine. Try simple stretching within your truck—raising one arm at a time, even wiggling your fingers and toes. Add some walking or light calisthenics outside the truck.

Here are some ways you can fit exercise into your lifestyle

- Start with 5 to 15 minutes of stretching and bodyweight exercises within the first hour of waking up to kick-start your metabolism
- In addition to the daily stretching and mobility exercises, shoot for 30 squats and 30 planks every other day. You can split them up throughout the day (for ex. 3 sets of 10 of each at different times). You can also do more if you feel strong and energized.
- Do 12 to 30 minutes of cardio exercise on alternate days. You can march in place, jog in place, go for a brisk walk or swim. Either way, you want to make sure you elevate your heart rate to a point where you are able to say a couple of sentences, but not have a full conversation. If you can barely speak at all, that is too intense at this point.

For a more thorough exercise program, and specific exercises designed for truck drivers, visit these sections in the Hirschbach videos here and here, or you can review your Vitality Self-Care laminated sheets for a sample exercise plan.

Movement and Exercise
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TOUCH

You can watch the Hirschbach video about touch here.

Some things Hirschbach drivers have said about touch:

“I find that when I do the hand massage at the beginning of the day and often at the end of the day, I feel invigorated and my hands are less painful and they feel more alive.”

“The hand massage was the best thing I learned. I do it when I am waiting for a load for a long time. It calms me down and I am not as anxious about the wait.”

“I do the hand massage with my elderly mother. She appreciates it and I feel like I am doing something for her.”

Please be sure to recognize that when we are talking about touching others here, it is crucial to be aware of situations where certain forms of touch are not only unappreciated but are illegal. This section does not authorize any unwanted or inappropriate touching of any individual.

Why Touch Matters

Research shows that contact from another person, in the form of touches such as a handshake, a hand on an arm or shoulder, or a hug, can have substantial benefits for wellness. Touch signals connection, support, safety, and trust. The person being touched and the person doing the touching both can benefit. Studies have shown that touch has many positive effects:

- Frequent hugs between spouses/partners are associated with lower blood pressure and higher oxytocin (“trust hormone”) levels in women (20-second hugs were more impactful than shorter ones);
- Hugs can reduce infectious illnesses such as flu and reduce the severity of flu symptoms;
- Touch can reduce stress and lower blood pressure;
- Children deprived of touch are more likely to have high stress levels and to have delayed or inadequate brain development;
• Greeting your romantic partner each day with a hug and a kiss that last at least six seconds, and always embracing at the end of the day, have been shown to significantly strengthen relationships.

To read more about these studies, see the “Resources” section at the end of the chapter.

“We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth.”
—Health researcher and therapist Virginia Satir

**Touching More**

With others, notice times when a handshake, a brief squeeze on the shoulder or arm, or a hug will be appropriate and appreciated. These things are particularly impactful with family members and loved ones.

You can informally “massage” your own hands, arms, and shoulders while driving, just to feel the pleasure of touch and to loosen up from tension.

It is easy to learn simple professional hand massage techniques that you can enjoy with another person. See those techniques in the Hirschbach video about touch [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxtSp8Ja2zk).

**Resources**

An excellent video for learning hand massage can also be seen here [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxtSp8Ja2zk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxtSp8Ja2zk)

**Research background**

Click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxtSp8Ja2zk) to read more about children and the effects of touch.

Click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxtSp8Ja2zk) to read more about how hugs can reduce infectious illnesses.

Click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxtSp8Ja2zk) to read more about how touch can reduce stress and lower blood pressure.
RELATIONSHIPS

You can watch the Hirschbach video about relationships here.

Some things Hirschbach drivers have said about relationships:

“I thought I was doing a good job of keep my relationships strong with my wife and kids. I was doing a pretty good job, but I have learned how I can do a lot better.”

“The active listening skills surprised me. I tried it with my wife and we appreciated it together. When I am on the phone with her, we practice it.”

“I did the ‘What I like about myself’ activity with my kids. It was fantastic. It has improved our relationships in many ways.”

“Since I have stopped fighting over small stuff all my relationships are much better, and I’m seeing that a whole lot of things are really small stuff in the big picture of having better relationships.”

Why Relationships Matter

“Dozens of studies have shown that people who have satisfying relationships with family, friends, and their community are happier, have fewer health problems, and live longer.” — Harvard Medical School newsletter

Positive, supportive relationships benefit your health in many ways. The health benefits of good relationships, demonstrated by research, include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heart health</th>
<th>Greater life expectancy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced stress</td>
<td>Better mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better digestion</td>
<td>Faster recovery from injury or illness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stronger immunity from illness and disease</td>
<td>Better sleep</td>
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Also—Children who have good relationships take better care of themselves and are less likely to start smoking, drinking, or doing drugs.
A survey of 5,000 people found that doubling your group of friends has the same effect on your sense of wellbeing as a 50 percent increase in income.

**Tips for Better Relationships**

Here are some things that have helped Hirschbach drivers.

1. **Begin with your relationship with yourself.** If you don’t really value yourself, it’s harder to build relationships with others. Each morning, look in the mirror and say fifteen things that you genuinely like about yourself. This can range from big things, such as “I am a great parent” or “I am a person who truly lives by what my faith teaches,” to seemingly lesser things, such as “I know how to have fun” or “I have sexy eyes.”

2. **Use active listening skills.** In communication situations when another person is speaking, most of us are more busy getting ready to talk than we are focused on really listening. “Active listening” means truly paying attention to what the other person is saying. It can dramatically improve your relationships. Active listening is demonstrated in the Hirschbach video [here](#).

3. **Increase the frequency of your interactions.** Have colleagues that you talk to; talk to family; connect with friends.

4. **Relate with people who make you feel good.** At home or work, look for individuals that raise your energy levels, give you reasons to smile and be optimistic. Research has shown that hanging out with healthy people increases your own likelihood of health—for example, non-obese people are more likely to have non-obese friends because healthy habits spread through our social connections.

5. **Put the relationship first.** In most situations, it is better to preserve a good relationship than it is to “win.” Even when you are certain that you are right, or that your way is the best way, it can often be better for your relationship to accept the other person’s viewpoint or idea, or to find a compromise. Some people say that “You may be right” are magical words that are not spoken often enough.

**Thoughts From The “Love Lab”**

There are not many people who know more about relationships than John Gottman. He founded the Gottman Institute, which is sometimes called the Relationships

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“Love Lab,” and he has conducted more than 40 years of careful research with more than 30,000 couples. You can see his thoughts and findings at the Institute’s blog, here. Here are some ideas from an interview conducted with him.

Q. What’s your biggest discovery?

A. It sounds simple, but in fact you could capture all of my research findings with the metaphor of a saltshaker. Instead of filling it with salt, fill it with all the ways you can say yes, and that’s what a good relationship is. “Yes,” you say, “that is a good idea.” “Yes, that’s a great point, I never thought of that.” “Yes, let’s do that if you think it’s important.” You sprinkle yeses throughout your interactions—that’s what a good relationship is. This is particularly important for men, whose ability to accept influence from women is really one of the most critical issues in a relationship. Marriages where the men say to their partners, “Gee, that’s a good point” or “Yeah, I guess we could do that” are much more likely to succeed.

In contrast, in a partnership that’s troubled, the saltshaker is filled with all the ways you can say no. . . . When a man is not willing to share power with his wife, our research shows, there is an 81% chance that the marriage will self-destruct.

Q. Does that mean that there’s no room for conflict in a good relationship?

Absolutely not. Having a conflict-free relationship does not mean having a happy one, and when I tell you to say yes a lot, I’m not advising simple compliance. Agreement is not the same as compliance, so if people think they’re giving in all the time, then their relationships are never going to work. There are conflicts that you absolutely must have because to give in is to give up some of your personality. . . .

A common issue in many relationships is punctuality. People have huge differences in their attitudes toward it and fight about it constantly. And they should—because unless you do, you can’t arrive at an understanding of your differences, which means you can’t work out how to live with them.

Q. What else do people in relationships fight about?

Most people fight about nothing. Their fights are not about money, or sex, or in-laws—none of that stuff. The vast majority of conflicts are about the way people in the relationship fight.
Unfortunately, most of the issues about the way people fight never get resolved at all. But repair is the thing that is absolutely necessary in relationships, so everybody needs to know how to process those regrettable moments.

I want to stress that good relationships are not just about knowing when to fight and how to patch things up. We also need humor, affection, playing, silliness, exploration, adventure, lust, touching—all those positive emotional things that we share with all mammals. Trivial moments provide opportunities for profound connection. For example, if you’re giving your little kid a bath and he splashes and you’re impatient, you miss an opportunity to play with him. But if you splash back and you clean up later, you have some fun together and you both get really wet, laugh, and have a beautiful moment. It short-lasting, small, even trivial—yet it builds trust and connection. In couples who divorce or who live together unhappily, such small moments of connection are rare.

Good relationships aren’t only about clear communication—they’re about small moments of attachment and intimacy.

Reminder: You can watch the Hirschbach video about relationships [here].

If you are in a relationship that makes you feel fearful, humiliated, or controlled, or are a victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, call 911 or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233
SLEEP AND REST

You can watch the Hirschbach video about sleep and rest here.

Some things Hirschbach drivers have said about sleep and rest:

“I thought that bad sleep and feeling tired a lot of the time was just part of being a truck driver. I used some simple ideas, like an eye mask and listening to a relaxation CD, and I’m sleeping so much better now.”

“I sleep better now. I think it’s from doing deep breathing at night, along with paying more attention to caffeine during the day and getting more regular exercise.”

“Taking a nap when I need one has completely changed how I feel all day.”

Napping can be a powerful way to be sure you get sufficient rest. See the section about napping on page 3.

Why Sleep and Rest Matter

Good sleep and rest benefit your health in many ways. They are also important so that you don’t become drowsy behind the wheel and cause accidents. Seven hours of sleep is the recommended minimum. For every hour less than seven hours that you sleep, you lose ten percent of your brain’s ability to function at its best.

The health benefits of being properly rested include:

- Helps reduce blood pressure
- Helps healing
- Helps prevent illness and infection
- Improves concentration
- Reduces stress
- Better mood
- Better memory
- Safety on the road
- Helps reduce inflammation and pain
- Reduces diabetes risk
- Live longer
Tips for Better Sleep

You know the many challenges to sleeping while on the road. Here are some things that have helped Hirschbach drivers.

→ Have your sleeping area as dark as possible. Consider wearing a sleep mask to cover your eyes. Turn off any device that emits light, or block the light from it.

→ Have a good-quality mattress and pillows. The investment is worth it. A mattress topper or pad might also help.

→ Eat a relatively light dinner of lean protein and vegetables.

→ Listen to a recorded sleep or relaxation CD. (Some are available in the wellness section of the Hirschbach App.)

→ Do some diaphragmatic breathing at bedtime. This can help far more than you might think. (Click here to go to the section of this manual on diaphragmatic breathing.)

→ Stop using all visual electronic devices (TV, tablet, texting, etc.) at least 45 minutes before you plan to go to sleep.

→ Get some good exercise during the day (but not too much within an hour of your bedtime). (Click here to go to the section of this manual on exercise.)

→ Block out noise with ear plugs and/or a “white noise” machine such as a fan.

→ Ask anyone who might call or contact you—family, friends, and dispatchers—to respect the time when you will be sleeping.

→ Maintain a cool temperature as much as possible. A battery-powered air conditioner can help. If you have windows open (there’s a tradeoff between silence and darkness on the one hand and comfortable temperatures on the other hand), consider using window screens to keep bugs out.

→ Be sure that you manage your caffeine intake so your sleep is not interfered with. The best rule is no caffeine for six hours before bedtime. Nicotine can also be a factor in sleeplessness.
Sleep Apnea

If you find yourself feeling tired a lot of the time, you could have undiagnosed sleep apnea, a condition in which breathing during sleep is interrupted. You should schedule a sleep study. If you are diagnosed with sleep apnea, it may become necessary to start using a CPAP machine when you sleep. Using the CPAP is very important: a 2016 study showed that the rate of serious, preventable crashes was five times higher among truck drivers with sleep apnea who failed to adhere to CPAP therapy than among drivers with sleep apnea who used their CPAP machines.

Napping

Short naps, of 10 to 20 minutes, can be great for your vitality without interfering with your nighttime sleep. Longer naps can leave you groggy and make you restless at night.

Naps are particularly important when you have not had at least seven hours of nighttime sleep, or when you’re feeling tired even if you did have a good night’s sleep.

Here are three napping tips:

- **Make it quick.** Set your cell phone alarm for 20 minutes or less so you don’t wake up groggy.
- **Go dark.** Nap in a dark place or wear an eye mask. Blocking out light helps you fall asleep faster.
- **Stay warm.** Put a blanket over you because your body temperature drops while you snooze.

Resources

The National Sleep Foundation provides information and advice, including advice about napping, at the website www.sleep.org.

Many articles about sleep for truck drivers are available on the internet. One long and detailed one can be read here: www.truck-drivers-money-saving-tips.com/sleep-better.html

Reminder: You can watch the Hirschbach video about sleep and rest here.
TYPE 2 DIABETES AND PREDIABETES

There are two principal types of diabetes: Type 1 and Type 2. About 95 percent of people with diabetes have Type 2, which is discussed in this chapter.

When you have diabetes, there is too much sugar (glucose) in your blood, and too little is getting into your muscle and fat cells. This is explained more below.

In the United States:

- More than 8 million people have undiagnosed diabetes
- More than 90 million people have prediabetes: they have high levels of sugar in their blood, but not high enough to be officially diagnosed with diabetes. People with prediabetes are at risk for developing diabetes.

Diabetes Basics

It would be good for you to watch the 4-minute video, “Diabetes Made Simple.” Click here to see the video. It explains a lot of what you need to know about diabetes. When you understand what’s going on in the body when a person has diabetes, it is easier to understand the effects, prevention, and treatment of diabetes.

Here’s how diabetes happens:

Foods that you eat are broken down in your stomach into either proteins, fats, or sugars. We’re only interested in the sugars here. Foods that are broken down primarily into sugars are carbohydrates.

The sugars enter your bloodstream, where they should be absorbed into your muscle and fat cells to provide energy for your body.

In people who do not have diabetes, the pancreas releases a hormone called insulin, which acts like a key to open the cells and let the sugar in. When your pancreas does not produce enough insulin, the cells do not open to receive the sugar, and so the sugar remains in your blood instead of going to your cells. Sometimes the body does produce enough insulin, but the cells still won’t open to receive the sugar.

Other organs, including the liver and kidneys, are involved in diabetes, but here we have just given you some basic information.

Primary Symptoms of Type 2 Diabetes

The primary symptoms of diabetes result from the process that was just described. Many people with prediabetes or even actual diabetes might not
experience strong symptoms. A medical test of your blood sugar level is the best way to determine whether you have diabetes or prediabetes.

♦ When your cells are not receiving enough sugar for energy, you might feel tired or fatigued.

♦ Your cells might release fluids to try to dilute the amount of sugar in your bloodstream. When that happens, you might become very thirsty and have to urinate frequently.

♦ As your body tries to get more nourishment to your cells, you might become very hungry.

♦ As a result of urinating a lot, you might have rapid weight loss.

♦ Excess sugar in your blood affects your organs and tissues. When your eyes are affected, you are likely to have blurred vision. You can also have tingling in your hands and feet from nerve damage, and you can develop red, swollen, tender gums.

♦ People with prediabetes sometimes have darkened skin on certain parts of the body. Common areas that may be affected include the neck, armpits, elbows, knees, and knuckles.

♦ Over time, untreated diabetes can damage your heart and other organs and lead to other severe consequences that include loss of vision, severe pain, amputated limbs, kidney failure, heart failure, and death. Diabetes is the 7th leading cause of death in the United States.

Diabetes Risk Factors

Your diabetes risk is affected by your weight, your diet, your physical activity, and your blood pressure, as well as your family history and other factors. In the “Resources” section of this chapter you will find a link to a diabetes risk calculator.

Preventing Diabetes or Lowering Your Risk of Getting Diabetes

The core advice for avoiding diabetes is to:

Eat healthy foods. Choose foods lower in fat and calories and higher in fiber. Focus on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Click here to go to the section of this manual on nutrition.

Be active. Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day. Take a brisk daily walk. Ride a bike. Swim laps. If you can’t fit in a
long workout, spread 10-minute or longer sessions throughout the day. Click here to go to the section of this manual on exercise.

*Lose excess pounds.* If you’re overweight, losing 7 percent of your body weight can reduce the risk of diabetes. To keep your weight in a healthy range, focus on permanent changes to your eating and exercise habits. Motivate yourself by remembering the benefits of losing weight, such as a healthier heart, more energy, and improved self-esteem.

Sometimes medication is also an option, but healthy lifestyle choices are most important.

**Resources**

The “Diabetes Made Simple” video mentioned on page 1 is at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGL6km1NBWE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGL6km1NBWE)

A more detailed video is at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9XYnZdE1PE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9XYnZdE1PE)

If you go to youtube to look at these videos, you will see many other videos that might interest you.


The website of the American Diabetes Association is a good source of information: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

The American Diabetes Association also publishes a monthly magazine full of tips and information: [www.diabetesforecast.org](http://www.diabetesforecast.org)

Websites of health-related organizations, such as the Mayo Clinic, provide extensive information about diabetes. The Mayo Clinic’s prediabetes information begins here: [http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/prediabetes/basics/definition/con-20024420](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/prediabetes/basics/definition/con-20024420)
HEALTH RISKS OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Overweight and obesity may increase the risk of many health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. If you are pregnant, excess weight may lead to short- and long-term health problems for you and your child.

Overweight and obesity are factors in the following health issues (click on any one to go directly to that topic):

- **Type 2 diabetes**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Heart disease**
- **Stroke**
- **Certain types of cancer**
- **Sleep apnea**
- **Osteoarthritis**
- **Fatty liver disease**
- **Kidney disease**
- **Pregnancy problems**

The best ways to lose excess weight are through diet and exercise.

To go to the chapter in this manual about healthy eating, click here.
To go to the chapter in this manual about exercise, click here.

How to know if you weigh too much

How can you tell if your weight could increase your chances of developing health problems? Knowing two numbers may help you understand your risk: your body mass index (BMI) score, and your waist size in inches.

**Body Mass Index (BMI)**

The BMI is one way to tell whether you are at a normal weight, are overweight, or have obesity. It measures your weight in relation to your height and provides a score to help place you in a category:

Click here to calculate your BMI using your height and weight.

**Waist Size**

Another important number to know is your waist size in inches. Having too much fat around your waist may increase health risks even more than having fat in other parts of your body. Women with a waist size of more than 35 inches and men with a waist size of more than 40 inches may have higher chances of developing diseases related to obesity.
Connection Between Excess Weight And Type 2 Diabetes

About 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese. If you have type 2 diabetes, losing weight and becoming more physically active can help you control your blood sugar levels and prevent or delay health problems. Losing weight and exercising more may also allow you to reduce the amount of diabetes medicine you take.

To go to the chapter in this manual about diabetes, click here.

Connection Between Excess Weight And High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is linked to overweight and obesity in several ways. Having a large body size may increase blood pressure because your heart needs to pump harder to supply blood to all your cells. Excess fat may also damage your kidneys, which help regulate blood pressure.

Weight loss that gets you close to the normal BMI range may greatly lower high blood pressure. Other helpful changes are to quit smoking, reduce salt, and get regular physical activity.

Connection Between Excess Weight And Heart Disease

People who are overweight or obese often have health problems that may increase the risk for heart disease. These health problems include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high blood sugar. In addition, excess weight may cause changes to your heart that make it work harder to send blood to all the cells in your body.

Losing 5 to 10 percent of your weight may lower your chances of developing heart disease. Weight loss may improve blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood flow.

To go to the chapter in this manual about heart disease, click here.
Connection Between Excess Weight And Stroke

Overweight and obesity are known to increase blood pressure. High blood pressure is the leading cause of strokes. Excess weight also increases your chances of developing other problems linked to strokes, including high cholesterol, high blood sugar, and heart disease.

One of the most important things you can do to reduce your stroke risk is to keep your blood pressure under control. Losing weight may help you lower your blood pressure. It may also improve your cholesterol and blood sugar, which may then lower your risk for stroke.

Connection Between Excess Weight And Cancer

Being overweight increases the risk of developing certain cancers, including colon and rectum cancer, breast cancer, and cancers of the gallbladder, kidneys, and endometrium (lining of the uterus).

Avoiding weight gain may prevent a rise in your cancer risk. Healthy eating and physical activity habits may lower cancer risk.

Connection Between Excess Weight And Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a condition in which a person has one or more pauses in breathing during sleep. Obesity is the most important risk factor for sleep apnea. A person who is overweight may have more fat stored around his or her neck. This may make the airway smaller. A smaller airway can make breathing difficult. In addition, fat stored in the neck and throughout the body may produce substances that cause inflammation. Inflammation in the neck is a risk factor for sleep apnea.

Weight loss usually improves sleep apnea by helping to decrease neck size and reducing inflammation.
Connection Between Excess Weight And Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a common health problem that causes pain and stiffness in your joints. Being overweight is one of the risk factors for osteoarthritis. Extra weight may place extra pressure on joints and cartilage, causing them to wear away. In addition, people with more body fat may have higher blood levels of substances that cause inflammation. Inflamed joints may raise the risk for osteoarthritis.

Losing weight may help reduce the risk of developing osteoarthritis. Weight loss of at least 5 percent of your body weight may decrease stress on your knees, hips, and lower back and lessen inflammation in your body. Research also shows that exercise is one of the best treatments for osteoarthritis.

Connection Between Excess Weight And Fatty Liver Disease

Fatty liver disease, also known as nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, occurs when fat builds up in the liver and causes injury. Fatty liver disease may lead to severe liver damage, or even liver failure. The disease most often affects people who are middle-aged, overweight or obese, and/or diabetic.

Patients are generally advised to lose weight, eat a healthy diet, increase physical activity, and avoid drinking alcohol. If you have fatty liver disease, lowering your body weight to a healthy range may improve liver tests and reverse the disease to some extent.

Connection Between Excess Weight And Kidney Disease

Kidney disease means that the kidneys are damaged and can’t filter blood like they should. This damage can cause wastes to build up in the body. It can also cause other problems that can harm your health.

Obesity increases the risk of diabetes and high blood pressure, the most common causes of chronic kidney disease. Recent studies suggest that obesity itself may promote chronic kidney disease and quicken its progress.

If you are in the early stages of chronic kidney disease, losing weight may slow the disease and keep your kidneys healthier longer. You should also choose...
foods with less salt (sodium), keep your blood pressure under control, and keep your blood glucose in the target range.

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Connection Between Excess Weight And Pregnancy Problems

Overweight and obesity raise the risk of health problems for both mother and baby that may occur during pregnancy. Pregnant women who are overweight or obese may have an increased risk for developing diabetes, having high blood pressure during pregnancy that can cause severe problems for both mother and baby if left untreated, and needing a C-section and, as a result, taking longer to recover after giving birth.

Babies of overweight or obese mothers are at an increased risk of being born too soon, being stillborn, and having defects of the brain and spinal cord.

Pregnant women who are overweight are more likely to develop insulin resistance, high blood sugar, and high blood pressure. Overweight also increases the risks associated with surgery and anesthesia, and severe obesity increases surgery time and blood loss. Gaining too much weight during pregnancy can have long-term effects for both mother and child. These effects include that the mother will have overweight or obesity after the child is born. Another risk is that the baby may gain too much weight later as a child or as an adult. Talk to your health care provider about how much weight gain is right for you during pregnancy.

If you are overweight or obese and would like to become pregnant, talk to your health care provider about losing weight first. Reaching a normal weight before becoming pregnant may reduce your chances of developing weight-related problems. Pregnant women who are overweight or obese should speak with their health care provider about limiting weight gain and being physically active during pregnancy.

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Lowering Your Risk Of Health Problems Related To Excess Weight

If you are considered to be overweight, losing as little as 5 percent of your body weight may lower your risk for several diseases, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes. If you weigh 200 pounds, this means losing 10 pounds. Slow
and steady weight loss of 1/2 to 2 pounds per week, and not more than 3 pounds per week, is the safest way to lose weight.

To go to the chapter in this manual about healthy eating, click here.
To go to the chapter in this manual about exercise, click here.

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MANAGING STRESS

There are several forms of stress. In this chapter we are dealing principally with what is called routine job stress—the stress that comes from the nature of your job.

Other forms of stress—such as stress from relationship issues or financial worries, or stress from a sudden negative change or a traumatic incident—might be helped by some of the approaches described here, but they are not the focus of this chapter.

As you will see, many of the other topics in this manual are essential for reducing and managing stress.

How Routine Job Stress Can Affect Your Health

When you face a situation that is dangerous or potentially dangerous, your pulse speeds up, you breathe faster, your muscles tense, your blood pressure rises, and your brain uses more oxygen. These reactions can help you cope with that dangerous situation, but stress that is repeated over time prevents your organs from functioning properly and can create issues throughout your body. The health risks from such stress include:

- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Digestive system problems
- Diabetes
- Reproductive system issues
- Headaches
- Obesity
- Sleep issues
- Skin problems
- Depression
- Asthma
- Arthritis

People who experience too much stress for too long sometimes try to cope by resorting to dangerous and counterproductive habits such as drinking too much alcohol, smoking, abusing drugs, or bingeing on junk food.

Symptoms of Stress

Everyone handles stress differently, and so they will have different primary symptoms. Many people can come to think as stress as a “normal” part of their life, or at least an acceptable one. But for your health, it should be addressed and treated.

Because symptoms of stress can also be symptoms of other medical or psychological conditions, you might need to talk with your doctor to sort out what is going on.
The *emotional* symptoms of stress can include:

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless and depressed
- Avoiding others.

The *physical* symptoms of stress can include:

- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in your ears
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Excess sweating
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth.

**Reducing and Managing Stress**

These strategies are likely to help you manage stress and its effects. Remember that a doctor’s advice can be very important for stress management.

1. **Exercise**

Just about any form of physical activity can help relieve stress. Exercise releases natural chemicals in your body that boost your mood and make you feel better, and it can also be a valuable distraction from your daily worries. Click [here](#) to go to the chapter in this manual about exercise.

2. **Eat right**

Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of...
what you eat. Keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day. Click here to go to the chapter in this manual about eating right.

3. Get your rest
Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress. Click here to go to the chapter in this manual about rest.

4. Build supportive relationships
There is nothing more calming to your nervous system than communicating with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress. Click here to go to the chapter in this manual about relationships.

5. Breathe
Diaphragmatic breathing has been shown to reduce stress. Click here to go to the chapter in this manual about diaphragmatic breathing.

6. Hydrate
Having enough water in your system can help flush out stress-related chemicals, help keep your mind clear, and reduce the physical and psychological effects of stress. Click here to go to the chapter in this manual about hydration.

7. Enjoy life more
Even if your job is stress central, you can find one hobby or two that enrich your world. What brings you happiness and contentment? And while you're driving, try to notice the beauty that is around you. If something is special, allow yourself a few minutes once in a while to pull over when you can and soak it in. Get out and take a deep breath of fresh air. Stress is what you allow it to be. Be bigger than stress.

8. Practice relaxation
Relaxing helps your body and nervous system to settle and readjust. Consider listening to a relaxation tape or CD, or listening to music or sounds that relax you. You should also consider learning a formal relaxation technique such as progressive muscle relaxation, visualization, meditation, or yoga. CDs for relaxation are available through . . . [??]

9. Get some help
Experienced and skillful professionals can help you manage stress, either one-on-one or in a stress-management class.

Managing Stress
This information is for general information purposes only, and is not intended to be medically complete. It is not a substitute for the advice of a physician or other medical professional.
If you or someone close to you is overwhelmed by stress and in crisis, call the toll-free, 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Resources

These websites are good sources of general information:

American Psychological Association: http://www.apa.org/topics/stress/
American Heart Association: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/StressManagement/Stress-Management_UCM_001082_SubHomePage.jsp
HEART DISEASE/CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

In this chapter we discuss the most common form of heart disease, which is coronary artery disease. Coronary artery disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. It is preventable and treatable.

First, be aware of the warning signs of heart attack. Notice that these warning signs are somewhat different for women than for men.

### MAJOR WARNING SIGNS OF HEART ATTACK

Every year about 735,000 Americans have a heart attack. You should know the major warning signs and symptoms of heart attacks. They are different for men and women.

Although some heart attacks are sudden and intense, most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Pay attention to your body — and CALL 911 if you feel:

**Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.

**Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

**Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.

**Other signs** may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women’s most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

*Source: American Heart Association. Click [here](#) for more information.*

### Primary Risk Factors for Coronary Artery Disease

Your risk for coronary artery disease increases with the number of risk factors you have. Here are some of the main risk factors:

- Physical inactivity
- Too much stress
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Overweight or obesity
Lifestyle Practices For Preventing And Managing Coronary Artery Disease

Following your doctor’s advice is critical for people who have been diagnosed with CAD. Medications can treat certain aspects of your condition, such as medicines to reduce cholesterol, to lower blood pressure, or to prevent blood clots. Sometimes, medical procedures or surgery are appropriate forms of treatment.

Healthy lifestyle practices are an important part of preventing and treating coronary artery disease. These include:

- Getting more exercise (Click here to go to the section of this guide on exercise)
- Eating more healthily (Click here to go to the section of this guide on healthy eating)
- Reducing stress (Click here to go to the section of this guide on reducing stress)
- Losing weight, which is a result of overall healthy practices
- Stopping smoking

The Underlying Physical Mechanisms of Coronary Artery Disease

The underlying mechanism of CAD is the buildup of deposits of fat and other substances in the three arteries that carry blood to the heart. These deposits are called plaque. When one or more of these arteries become narrowed by plaque, the heart does not get enough blood and it does not function properly.

If plaque completely blocks an artery, heart failure will occur.
Cholesterol

The levels of cholesterol in your blood can indicate the likelihood that you have plaque buildup in your arteries. Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your blood. It exists in two forms: HDL cholesterol and LDL cholesterol. HDL cholesterol is considered “good” cholesterol because it helps prevent fatty buildup in your arteries. LDL cholesterol is known as “bad” cholesterol because it does just the opposite, building up in the walls of your blood vessels.

Resources

A short video about the heart and heart disease can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cW8__wFXDA

There are various risk calculators for coronary artery disease at medical sites. Most require that the person using the calculator knows his or her cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Here’s one calculator: http://cvdrisk.nhlbi.nih.gov/

The website of the American Heart Association is a good source of information: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/

Websites of health-related organizations, such as the Mayo Clinic, provide extensive information about many conditions. The Mayo Clinic’s information about CAD begins here: http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronary-artery-disease/home/ovc-20165305