

DRIVING ADVISORY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Health and wellbeing are crucial for drivers, as their work often involves long hours on the road. The longer you're driving, the more physical and mental health issues can present challenges.

➤ **Maintaining good health is not only important for personal quality of life but also essential for your safety, job performance, and the safety of others on the road.**

Physically, professional drivers doing high mileage often experience issues such as back pain, poor posture, and eye strain due to the sedentary nature of their work. Coupled to repetitive motions like steering or shifting gears, this can lead to musculoskeletal disorders.

But it's not just physical health that needs to be looked after. Long hours behind the wheel, often alone, are for some drivers not always conducive to good mental health.

In this RED Driving Advisory, we'll look at each area and how drivers can be healthier, and safer.

Seating

Making sure you're in the best driving position will help reduce stress on your body. Here are 6 keys to sitting properly.

Seat Position

Adjust your seat so you can reach the pedals comfortably with a slight bend in your knees when fully pressing them. Your back should be fully supported by the seat.

Steering Wheel Grip

Hold the steering wheel at the '9 and 3' or '8 and 4' position for better control and reduced fatigue. Avoid gripping too tightly.



Backrest Angle

The seatback should be slightly reclined (about 100 to 110 degrees) to maintain good posture while keeping your shoulders in contact with the seat.

Headrest Adjustment

Position the headrest so that the top is level with the top of your head, reducing the risk of whiplash in a collision.

Mirrors & Visibility

Adjust side and rearview mirrors to minimise blind spots while maintaining a clear view of the road behind.

Foot Position

Your heels should rest on the floor, allowing smooth and precise control of the pedals without stretching or tensing your legs.



Eating

Eating healthily is crucial as diet directly impacts your physical health, mental performance, and overall safety on the road.

Consume nutritious foods to help maintain consistent energy levels throughout the day, preventing the sluggishness or fatigue that often comes with quick, unhealthy snacks like crisps or sugary foods.

A steady supply of energy through whole grains, fruits and proteins, with a well-balanced diet rich in vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fatty acids helps you stay alert and focused.

Then there are the longer-term effects of diet. Drivers at work are often sedentary for many hours, increasing the risk of issues like obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

By choosing meals that include fibre, lean proteins and healthy fats, you can reduce the likelihood of developing these conditions.

Also, a balanced diet supports the immune system, helping avoid illnesses that could lead to missed work or impaired driving performance.

Eating healthily also encourages better digestion, contributing to improved comfort during long drives.



A driver's diet

Make sure you get plenty of these...

- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Fibre
- Lean proteins
- Healthy fats
- Whole grains
- Fruits



Drinking

Good hydration is essential as it directly affects your physical and mental performance, especially during long drives or extended hours on the road. It helps maintain focus, alertness, and overall well-being.

Dehydration, even in mild forms, can impair cognitive function, reduce concentration and slow reaction times, and when your body lacks sufficient fluids, the brain becomes less efficient, leading to symptoms such as:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Impaired judgement
- Lack of stamina



Thinking

Driving can be stressful, with drivers often facing tight schedules, traffic congestion, and long periods of isolation. These factors can contribute to anxiety, depression, and burnout, while psychological health directly affects your ability to stay focused, make decisions, and respond to challenges on the road.

Maintaining mental well-being through social support, relaxation techniques and proper work-life balance is crucial to prevent fatigue and improve focus. Furthermore, driver fatigue is a major risk factor for accidents. Those who prioritise sleep and rest are more alert, reducing the likelihood of errors.

Driving can take a significant toll on mental health, while tight deadlines, traffic congestion and long hours behind the wheel can add more pressure, leading to feelings of frustration, irritability, or even road rage. These emotional states can impair decision-making and reaction times.

Social isolation is another challenge for many drivers, particularly those who work alone for long hours. It's important to stay connected with family, friends or colleagues to maintain a strong support network, which can help combat feelings of isolation and enhance overall mental health.



5 tips to better mental health



- **Sleep better**
Avoid mobile phones, have a routine, use blackout curtains
- **Balance work and life**
Work is important but ensure you can take time out
- **Reduce stress**
Share problems, and ask for help
- **Keep in touch**
Don't get isolated, keep in regular contact with others
- **Eat and drink well**
Better diet means better cognitive function

Other help



Technology

Systems such as active cruise control, collisions avoidance, lane keeping and tiredness monitors in vehicles can all help you – but don't rely on them.



Glasses

Is your eyesight good enough? Battling poor vision can make you tired. Get your eyes checked regularly in case you need glasses.



Medication

It might be that you need medication to help with mental or physical conditions: but make certain you know their side effects before driving. Consult your doctor.

RED Advisories

RED has produced a series of advisory leaflets covering everything from towing to fatigue. To download a copy, click [here](#)



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