

SafetyBulletin

5 Surprising (and Easy) Ways to Stay Heart Healthy

Life on the road is hard. Even if you find time to exercise, you still sit for long periods of time. What's more, every freeway exit offers unhealthy temptations, everything from greasy fast foods to cigarettes.

But it's not hard – or costly – to stay healthy. Shift your heart health into high gear with these five surprising (and easy) tips:



1. Brush and floss your teeth. When you keep your teeth healthy, your heart may benefit. Regular brushing and flossing (twice a day) helps to reduce gum disease, which is closely linked to heart disease and other health risks. Recent studies show that treating gum disease (or keeping it away) can lead to better overall health, too.

2. Protect your sleep. A recent American Heart Association (AHA) study shows that many Americans are cutting back on the amount of hours they sleep. This leads to increased risks for heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes. The AHA recommends you get at least seven hours of uninterrupted sleep each night. If you have obstructive sleep apnea or another condition that disrupts your sleep, get it checked out now.

3. Check those labels. Do you eat snacks on the road to keep your energy level high? If so, read that label before you grab that bright-colored bag of chips off the convenience store shelf. Look for one thing: trans fats. They raise your bad (LDL) cholesterol level, which increases your heart risk. The good news: Food manufacturers today make an increasing number of trans-fat-free snacks. Choose them instead.

4. Laugh out loud. Traffic jams. Rude drivers. Bad weather. They all add aggravation to the already stressful job of truck driving. Stress may increase your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. So take a stress break. Find something to smile and laugh about. It will improve your mood and may help your heart.

5. Have a 'berry' good time. Everyone tells you to eat more fruits and vegetables. But what food is best for heart health? Try strawberries or blueberries. They're loaded with fiber and something called polyphenols, which are shown to improve heart health. Can't find berries? Try chocolate. Some studies show that people who eat more chocolate have lower rates of heart attack, heart failure and even death from heart disease.