

Forward to Your Drivers: 5 Tips on How to Pass Your DOT Physical



Bob Perry

DOT physicals are one of the biggest challenges for commercial truck drivers. Living on the road with many consecutive hours spent in a seated position often leads to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions that put drivers' health at risk. While many trucks stop now offer fresh salads, sandwiches, and other healthy foods, many drivers still reach for greasy fried foods, donuts, energy drinks, and sodas.

The more overweight and sedentary drivers become, the more trouble they may have when it's time to re-certify for DOT medical cards. When drivers struggle to maintain valid medical cards, driver recruitment and retention are much harder.

Company-sponsored health and wellness programs can help your drivers stay fit and ready for their DOT physicals, but ultimately, the most important things are the choices drivers make out on the road daily. Industry expert Bob Perry advises drivers to start focusing on [DOT physical preparation](#) at least 90 days before their exam. If you want to empower your drivers to be better prepared, consider these five tips that you can pass along.

1. Build Stress Management into Your Daily Life

Stress management is critical to overall driver health. When researchers took to the roadways and asked 61 drivers about their life on the highway, they found the following [stress factors](#) prevalent in the industry:

- Poor pay
- Loneliness
- Social isolation
- Disrespect

- Safety regulations
- Unhealthy lifestyles

The best drivers are those who can control their response to these stressors and make healthy decisions regardless of their situation, making them less likely to experience severe health conditions that may cost them their medical certification. In addition, simple strategies like deep breathing, journaling, and meditating can help drivers lower their stress when the heat picks up on the road.

2. Get High Blood Pressure Under Control

High blood pressure is one of the most common reasons drivers lose their medical certifications. Controlling stress is a great way to lower blood pressure, but other lifestyle factors are equally important. Some of the best ways to [reduce blood pressure](#) include the following:

- Nutrient-rich diet
- Routine exercise
- Reduce salt consumption
- Consistent, high-quality sleep
- Staying properly hydrated

Drivers should keep blood pressure monitors in their trucks and learn [how to check their blood pressure](#) on the road. Those struggling to keep their readings in the normal range should see a doctor to discuss blood pressure medication and lifestyle changes.

3. Consider Quitting or Cutting Back on Cigarettes Well in Advance of Your Physical

Cigarette smoking amplifies the negative impacts of an unhealthy diet, a sedentary lifestyle, and other risky habits. At least one study found a direct correlation between [cigarette smoking and food cravings](#), concluding that smokers are more likely to consume unhealthy foods and experience routine cravings. Researchers believe the connection has something to do with high rates of stress and depression in smokers.

Joining a program for smokers who want to quit and/or go cold turkey is some of the best ways drivers can improve their health. In addition, not smoking can also improve a driver's chance of passing their next DOT physical.

4. Get Creative to Increase your Daily Activity Level

The more drivers are active and moving; the more their health will improve. Simple actions like walking laps around truck stops and exercising in the cab of their truck when parked can make a big difference. For carriers, challenging your drivers to move more with creative challenges and even prizes can help get people involved and motivated.

5. Gather Information Regarding any Medical Conditions You Have and the Doctors Who Treat Those Conditions.

Finally, it is imperative to educate drivers about the need to provide honest Information regarding any diagnosed medical condition when they go through DOT re-certification. Lying during the physical is one of a driver's biggest mistakes. Instead, make sure your drivers know to go into their exam prepared with a list of medical conditions and the doctors currently treating them for those conditions.