

Truckies hit the road to better health

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QUT trials health program aimed at truck drivers.

The long hours and sedentary work life of truckies has the potential to be lethal when it comes to their health, but a new program is helping drivers adopt healthier habits.

QUT is conducting a Transport Industry Workplace Health Intervention, where [truck drivers](#) and researchers develop workplace-specific programs aimed at getting drivers to eat better and move more.

Health promotion expert Dr Marguerite Sendall, from QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, said due to the nature of their job, truck drivers were at higher risk of developing chronic "lifestyle" diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

"What we know about the risks of chronic disease has changed a lot in the past 30 years, and we now understand there is a very high risk from factors such as unhealthy diets, lack of [regular exercise](#), sedentariness and overweight and obesity," Dr Sendall said.

"We know more people die from sitting than smoking and truckies, by the very nature of their job, spend most of their working week sitting.

"On top of this, truckies work really long hours. A normal working day being 12 to 14 hours, in some states it is even longer, five or six days a week.

"There are certainly different pressures for truckies who go home every night and those who are away overnight or for five to seven days at a time.

"All of these pressures have a really big impact on their ability to do regular exercise and to eat well."

Dr Sendall said five Queensland trucking companies had agreed to undertake the program, which will run until the end of June.

"Each worksite has implemented a tailored plan to support employees to adopt healthier lifestyles, such as participating in a peer walking challenge, promoting healthy choices, providing access to the free Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service (13 HEALTH), or equipping trucks with food storage and cooking equipment," she said.

"I think the industry is receptive to a level of change but they are also very aware of the issues and pressures, such as regulation and timeslots, which impact on their ability to support truckies to lead a [healthy lifestyle](#).

"However, among the truckies we have spoken to, there seems to be a sentiment that it is their own, individual responsibility to live a healthier lifestyle. So if a truckie is overweight, for example, then the truckies feel the individual is responsible for adopting, or not, a healthier diet.

"But then the problem is they are stuck between a rock and hard place. It's so much harder for them to make lifestyle changes, because of the long hours and the nature of their work.

"That's why there is a need for this intervention - to help them overcome the challenges of their working environment."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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