

Safety Bulletin

Update on Driving With Diabetes

Do you feel very thirsty or hungry, even though you are eating and drinking well? Do you feel tired often? Do any cuts or bruises take extra time to heal? If so, you may be experiencing some common symptoms of diabetes.

For over-the-road drivers, diabetes is a serious concern. A 2015 Vital Signs update from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the rate of diabetes among truck drivers (14%) is twice that of the general population.

There are two types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes:** This type means your body does not produce insulin, a hormone that helps your body regulate blood sugar.
- **Type 2 diabetes:** This is the most common type, and it means your body is resistant to insulin.

When left untreated, diabetes can cause you to feel tingling or numbness in your hands and feet, blurry vision or frequent urination. The good news: once your diabetes is well managed, you can drive a truck, even if you use insulin.

Insulin and Truck Driving

While some people can manage their diabetes with just oral medications, others need to use insulin. At one time, insulin use disqualified truckers from driving. Today, drivers using insulin can apply for a medical waiver from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) if they meet certain criteria that show their diabetes is well managed.

You need to be on insulin for one month (for type 2 diabetes) or two months (for type 1) before you can apply, and it can take up to 180 days to receive the exemption.

New Tools to Manage Diabetes

If you already have an exemption — or if you are successfully managing your diabetes without insulin — you may benefit from technology you can find in your smartphone. Free apps for Android and Apple devices allow you to chart your blood sugar readings, plan meals, keep a food journal, track your medications and view message boards.

Keeping diabetes under control is difficult when you're on the road. Some quick tips:

- Always stock your truck with enough diabetes testing supplies.
- Maintain a regular schedule for eating meals and snacks, and for taking your medications.
- Pack healthy snacks, such as fresh fruit, nuts and seeds.
- Get free health screenings (available at many popular pharmacies and supercenters).
- Make walking and other exercise a priority on off-duty time.
- Quit smoking.

