



# Driver Mental Health & COVID-19

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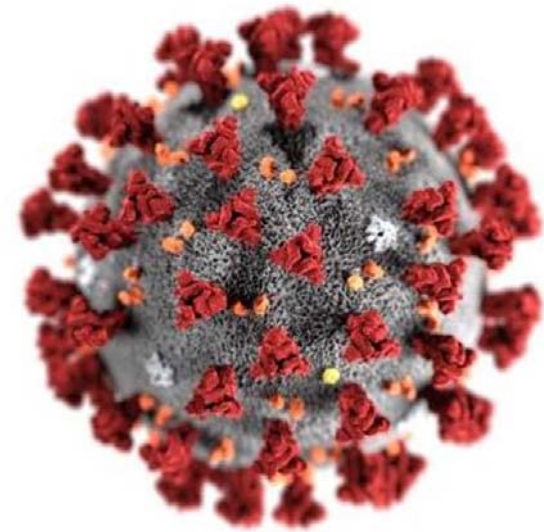
HEALTHY TRUCKER

A solid green horizontal bar spanning the width of the slide at the bottom.

# COVID-19

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- New & unique situation
- Evolving, state of emergency duration unknown
- No set “rule book” or training for this situation
- We can only do our best, learn, and move forward
- Just beginning to see the effects on mental health
- Social isolation varies amongst individuals



# What Drivers are Experiencing

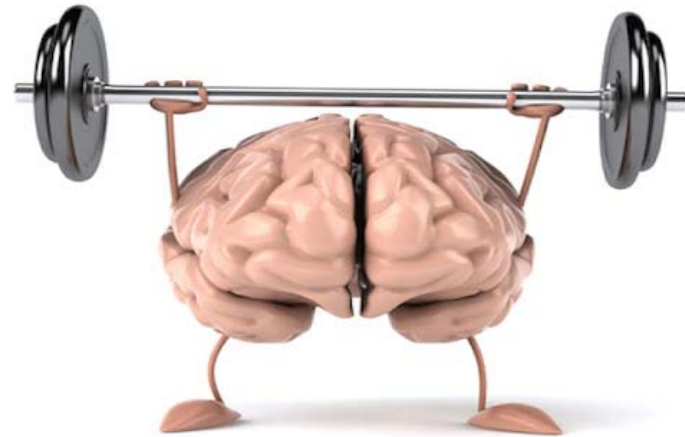
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- Both ends of the spectrum
- Many customers won't allow use of facilities, others are very accommodating
- Difficulty finding supplies: sanitizer, wipes, masks
- Treated as if they are carrying the virus
  - Unfortunately how we have to behave right now
- #ThankaTrucker initiatives provide support
- Still facing long, lonely days on the road
- Feelings made worse knowing so many are home
- Seeing the biggest difference in our world right now

# Mental Health Concerns & COVID-19

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- Fear
- Stress\*
- Anxiety
- Loneliness\*
- Depression\*
- Worsens existing mental health conditions
- Those who have never experienced mental health concerns may now be
- Family complexities: illness, older parents, finances, pre-existing conditions in children, childcare



# Effect on Physical Health & Safety

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- Poor sleep quality, duration
- Reduced immune system function
- Distractions, inability to focus on work, especially while driving
- Increase in stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol
  - Linked to blood pressure, abdominal fat, heart disease, stroke
- Some cope though substance use, direct link to physical health & safety on the road

# What we're Currently Facing

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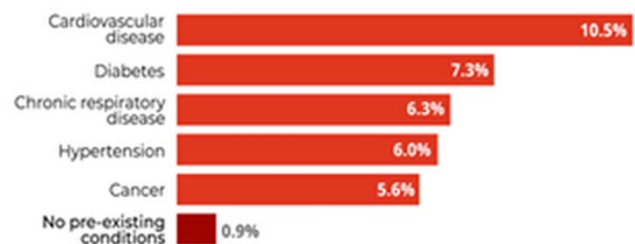
- Our priorities have changed
- Having to focus on a whole new set of stressors from usual
- We are in a constant state of flight or fight, survival mode
  - Work, protect family, get groceries, sanitize
- Will continue through the months of social distancing
- Can't expect people to perk up and move on with their regular duties without added stress
- Our mental health will ebb and flow through coming months
  - Mood, situation, needs will all change

# Pre-existing Conditions & COVID-19

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- Diabetes, hypertension, obesity, smoking linked to worse outcomes, ICU
- Many drivers fall into one or more of these categories
- Drivers are especially at risk, yet are essential and risking exposure
- Increases stress and fear levels for themselves and families

**Pre-existing medical conditions and COVID-19**  
COVID-19 death rate by pre-existing medical condition



Source: Author provided

# What can you do?

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- Communication is more crucial than ever
- Management should be in communication weekly, even if not normally
- Thank drivers/staff for a job well done, despite challenges
- Don't keep them in the dark, be open about changes within the company
- Have real conversations
- Ask about their concerns, what they need from you
- Try not to ask too much above and beyond
- Share mental health resources, benefits, EAP information



# Downtime

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- We all need time off right now, even if just 1 day/week
- Work to get drivers home, or to a safe place
- Limit communication on days off
- We all need to take that time to rest & recover, physically and mentally
- Working from home: days blur together, no separation of work/home life



# How are you doing?

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- While the majority of this was about your drivers and staff, I want to take a minute to discuss all of you
- I hope that you're all doing well, taking care of yourselves, and reaching out to friends and family or mental health resources if you need to
- Don't let your stress get to them, and don't allow their stress get to you
- Moving through one day at a time
- Carve out a new sense of routine and purpose for yourself
- Continue to reach out to friends, family and encourage them to do the same
  - This is our temporary lifestyle for the coming months

# Mental Health Resources

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- [Mental Health Crisis Line 24/7](tel:1-866-966-0991) (Bilingual): 1-866-966-0991
- CMHA Crisis Line: 1-833-456-4566
- [Ontario Online & Text Crisis Services](#) (English) – Chat 2:00 pm to 2:00 am | Text 2:00 pm to 2:00 am to #258258
- If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide or harming yourself, please call 9-1-1
- <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/external-covid-19-resources>