

A Woman's Guide to Basic Tire Care

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Women certainly are not helpless. But sometimes we are a little overwhelmed working a 40-hour week, taking care of the children, cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry. The car is just another added burden when there isn't a man around to tinker with it.

For the woman who finds herself in this situation, this is a short primer on routine tire care that will extend the life of your tires and hopefully make your life a little bit easier.

Check Tire Pressure Regularly:

Tire pressure should be checked whenever you suspect a problem or at a minimum, seasonally. Symptoms of improper tire pressure include excess wear and squeeling when going around a corner (for under-inflated tires) and reduced traction (for over-inflated tires).

Even the temperature can affect your tire pressure. Check your owner's manual to find where they've posted the proper tire pressure (usually on one of the doors) and be sure to keep it at that level. An improperly inflated tire not only wears quicker, it can also be dangerous when stopping and can cause tread separation.

You can purchase a tire-pressure gauge at your local auto parts store, use a gauge at the gas station or ask your tire dealer to check it for you.

Have Your Tires Rotated:

Tires should be rotated every 5000 - 6000 miles. For various reasons, all four tires on a car do not wear the same. The purpose of the tire rotation is to allow for even wear and an extended life for your tires.

Some manufacturers recommend "cross-rotation" (moving the right-front tire to the left-rear, etc.). Check your owner's manual for it's recommendations. Have your tire dealer rotate your tires regularly.

Check Your Wheel Alignment:

If you've hit a pothole or scraped your tire on a curb, your wheels may have been thrown out of alignment. Symptoms of wheels that are out of alignment are excessive wear (one tire may wear more than the others) and steering problems. You may notice that your car veers to the side when you're on a straight road or the car doesn't steer properly in a turn.

Unless you notice any of these symptoms, you should have your alignment checked annually.

Have Your Wheels Balanced at the Same Time They're Rotated:

An improperly balanced wheel will cause a vibration at higher speeds (50-70 MPH) which is noticeable in the steering wheel (if a front tire is out of balance) or in the seat (if a rear tire is out of balance). It will also increase wear of shock absorbers, struts and suspensions.

If you notice any of these symptoms, you should have your tire dealer take a look. He will need to locate the heavier part of the tire and attach a lead weight opposite it to counter-balance it.

Unless you notice any of these symptoms, you should have your wheel balanced every time you have them rotated (every 5000 - 6000 miles). Debbie Pettitt is webmaster for Everything Tires

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