



Spring car care

YOUR EXPERT GUIDE



Why is it important to check your fluids come spring?

Lubricant, coolant, cleaner — there are various fluids in your car that play several important roles when it comes to your engine's health. And since the mechanical components of your car are under heavy strain throughout the winter months, it's important to check your oil and other fluid levels when the weather lightens up in order maintain their effectiveness.

MOTOR OIL

Motor oil is subject to significant temperature variations during the cold season. These changes are responsible for the formation of moisture, which reduces the effectiveness of the oil's lubricating properties. That's why it's important to drain your fluids every spring, even if you don't drive much during the winter. Alternatively, if you use motor oil designed to withstand extreme cold, come spring, it will need to be replaced with one that's more suitable for summer weather.

OTHER FLUIDS

During the summer, coolant prevents your engine from overheating. So it's important to check on it before the sum-

During the winter, motor oil undergoes temperature variations that foster moisture formation and reduce its effectiveness. Change it in the spring!

mer heat wave finally hits. To preserve the mechanical parts of your car for as long as possible, your brake and power steering fluids have to be carefully maintained — your mechanic will make sure they stay at the appropriate levels so that your car continues to work at peak performance.

Last but not least, take a second to check your windshield wiper fluid: have you filled it since the last snowstorm? Don't wait until you need it to find out!



Is an end-of-warranty inspection necessary?



2. MONEY SAVED

Did your inspection reveal any problems? Whether they're major or minor, necessary or not, have them repaired immediately at your dealership. Since your vehicle is still under warranty, the manufacturer will repair them free of charge. In other words, an end-of-warranty inspection will help save money without having to sacrifice the condition of your vehicle.

There are usually a number of different warranties that apply to a vehicle. The full "bumper-to-bumper" warranty, which is typically mileage-based, is generally followed by a powertrain warranty (which has to do with the engine and transmission). Warranties might also apply to your paint job or pre-mature rusting, for example. Check your owner's manual to find out the details and make an appointment!

Is your car's warranty coming to an end? If so, have you thought about having your vehicle inspected before the deadline finally hits? In case you're hesitant to pull the trigger, here are a couple of arguments that might convince you to make an appointment for a pre-emptive inspection.

1. SAFETY ENSURED

An end-of-warranty inspection will allow you to get a full picture of your car's overall health. Chassis, brakes, suspension, exhaust system, cooling system, engine — nothing will be left to chance. You'll receive a detailed report of all the

repairs that need to be done, urgent and non-urgent alike. If circumstances call for it, your mechanic will even point out any preventative work that needs to be done. In short, an inspection will allow you to solve minor problems and inform you of any major problems that could cause an accident or serious injuries.



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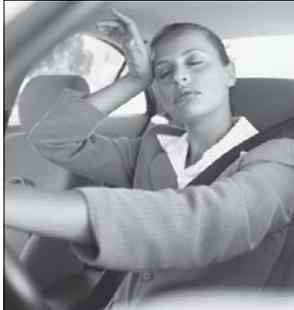


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Taking proper care of your air conditioner



If your car's air conditioning system has ever given up the ghost during a heat wave,

you know that driving in a hot car is not much fun. That is why it's important to keep your AC system well maintained. But how do you know if it is working properly? If your AC can maintain your vehicle's inside temperature at least 10° lower than the outside temperature, then things are okay.

When an air conditioning system is unable to do its job, the problem is usually caused by low fluid levels within the system. If a leak is not the main cause of the fluid loss, then a specialist will have to be consulted. Air conditioning systems are increasingly complex these days, meaning that maintenance work should always be carried out by recognized professionals.

A malfunction in the system could also be caused by a problem with the compressor, which is the key element in the cooling

system. If the compressor isn't functioning properly, it will likely have to be replaced. This can be a costly job, so before you instruct your mechanic to replace it, have it checked out first — some models have sensors that control the temperature and the pressure inside the system. These sensors might just be cutting power to the compressor to avoid overheating.

Lastly, if your car's cabin air filter is dirty or blocked, it may feel like the AC system isn't working at optimal output. Keep an eye on it and have it changed regularly. And don't forget that it is recommended to have your whole AC system checked once a year.

Tips for a clean Fresh-smelling car

This past winter probably wreaked havoc on your car's interior, what with all the road salt, sand, mud and grit that get tramped through it. Every nook and cranny of your carpets, console, mouldings and upholstery take a beating, and they need to be thoroughly cleaned when spring comes.

The first thing to remember is that it's vital to use the appropriate cleaning products so you don't damage any materials or change their appearance and colour. Specialized products with a beeswax or lanolin base are great for leather upholstery. Avoid using silicone products, as they can damage leather seats as well as the clothes you're wearing when you sit on them.

Cleaning products specifically designed to shine up plastics and wood are also available in stores. However, a more economical option is to use a damp cloth along with a mild soap and hot water. For your



car windows, a mixture of water and vinegar is effective, or you could always opt for a streak-free glass cleaner.

CIGARETTE SMOKE

There are lots of homemade remedies for cars that reek of cigarette smoke. The first step is to wash your ashtray, of course. Then fill two plastic dishes with

distilled white vinegar and place them carefully side by side, uncovered, in the back of the vehicle. After a few hours, the vinegar should have absorbed the smell. If the odour persists, sprinkle the seats and carpeting with baking soda, leave for a few hours, and then vacuum thoroughly.

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Five good reasons to visit your mechanic this spring

Between salt, potholes, snowstorms and ice, winter isn't the best for our poor cars. If you haven't already made an appointment for an inspection this spring, here are a few reasons why it might be a good idea to do so:

1. TO ENHANCE COMFORT

Difficult road conditions in winter can affect your car in different ways. For example, your alignment might be off, causing your drive to be less than pleasant.

2. TO IMPROVE SAFETY

Winder driving conditions are conducive to rust formation, especially on and around your brakes. Take advantage of your tire change and have a detailed inspection done to ensure your vehicle is safe to drive.

3. TO MAKE YOUR VEHICLE LAST

In addition to skewing your wheel alignment — something that can prematurely ruin your

tires — driving on winter roads can damage parts of your engine and reduce the effectiveness of the additives in your motor oil. It's no secret that regularly scheduled maintenance is the best way to maximize your vehicle's lifespan.

4. TO SAVE MONEY

A springtime inspection will help prevent your car from breaking down and can correct minor problems before they become serious. This will help you save money in the long run!

5. TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Low tire pressure, low oil levels, broken filters, defective climate control — a poorly maintained car burns more fuel, which isn't good for the environment or your wallet!

A well-maintained vehicle provides peace of mind — and peace of mind is priceless.



Have your car looking spotless in six easy steps



With sunny days once again looming on the horizon, it's without a doubt time to start thinking about having your car cleaned from top to bottom. Ready to roll? Here's a small reminder of the main tasks you'll have to take care of:

1. Lighten your load. Take everything you know you won't be needing this summer out of your trunk (shovels, sandbags, etc.) and remove any winter gear (skis for example) that will make your car heavy for no reason. Making your car lighter and more aerodynamic will improve its fuel efficiency.

2. Vacuum. Pick up or throw away everything that's lying around in your car, take out the carpets and vacuum the floors. This will remove all the dust and gravel that's accumulated over the winter.

3. Clean the carpets. Rid your carpets of any salt stains with a mixture of 1 cup of vinegar and 4 cups of warm water (and a stiff brush, of course).

4. Clean the interior. Use a damp cloth along with specialized cleaning products for each type of surface in your car (leather, fabric, etc.) to clean the dashboard, seats, doors and other accessories.

5. Make the body sparkle. Rinse the exterior of the car thoroughly, and then clean it from top to bottom (the hood, roof, trunk, doors, bumpers,

wheels, rims) with products that are suitable for the task (and won't damage the paint). Note that it's far easier to work in cloudy weather, which prevents streaks.

6. Wash the windows. Clean your windows with the help of a specialized cleaning product or with homemade cleaner (such as the one used to clean your carpets).

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Heat: the number one enemy of batteries



Beware of extreme heat and overloads; they can shorten the life of your battery.

It is a common misconception that cold winter temperatures are the most damaging for a car battery, but the truth is quite the opposite. In fact, there is nothing worse than extreme heat for reducing its lifespan. This is important information, because proper battery care is essential for the smooth starting and running of your car.

Extreme heat and overload are the two main culprits responsible for shortening the life of a battery. Heat causes the evaporation of the battery's fluid contents, which results in damage to its internal structure. As for overloads, these are often caused by a malfunction in the regulation system of the charge controller, causing the battery to keep on charging

after it is fully powered. That will cause it fatal damage.

Here are a few useful tips for extending the life of your battery to the maximum. First of all, ensure that the charge controller is maintaining the correct voltage flow; an overload is as damaging as a drained battery. Next, if it is possible to do so, regularly check the level of the fluids in your battery (some are permanently sealed). If it is possible, the levels can be adjusted when necessary. This procedure is especially important during periods of hot weather. Add distilled water if necessary. Lastly, always keep the top of your battery clean. Accumulated residues can act as conductors and drain a battery's energy.

Have you looked at your tires lately?

In many parts of Canada, people have a tendency toward keeping their all-season tires on all year long, which means that they wear out faster. Don't expect snow to cushion your tires. Snow can still be abrasive. So tires do wear, especially when it's slippery.

Summer is just around the corner. You may think that just because there is no snow or ice on the roads that your tires are good for summer. But have you thought about rain or wet pavement? How can you be sure your tires are safe?

First of all, make sure your tires are not too old. If in doubt, ask a professional to find out when the tire was made. Slight cracks in the rubber are an indication that the tire may

be getting old and needs to be replaced. Secondly, make sure you have enough tread for the upcoming season. Modern tires have wear indicators within the grooves and once they're visible across the grooves, the tire has gone beyond the manufacturer's limits. Just about anywhere in North America, the legal minimum tread depth is 1/16th of an inch. But don't wait until then before changing your worn tires.

Also check for uneven wear, which can be caused by underinflation or misalignment. In that case, check with a professional who will make the proper recommendations and will probably recommend rotation at the same time. Oh! And don't forget that spare tire while you're at it.

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Did You Know?

Abrupt accelerations, tight turns and the weight of the engine all put an extra burden on your front tires. Switch your front and back tires every 10,000 kilometres to ensure a more uniform wear and prolong their lifespan.