

Car Care Corner

Car Maintenance Made Easy

by Pat Lazzaro

(NAPSA)—Women are a driving force behind more than 80 percent of all car purchases. Yet over one-third of women experience “auto” phobia—fearing anything that has to do with servicing cars. However, there’s no need to stall when it comes to servicing your car. It’s less challenging if you follow these basic maintenance tips:



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Maintain Fluids

There are six main fluids to check and maintain in accordance with your vehicle manufacturer’s scheduled maintenance:

1. *Washer fluid.* Use a commercial windshield washer solvent.

2. *Brake fluid.* Most brake fluids absorb moisture, causing fluid deterioration and contamination over time. It’s generally recommended that it be flushed during brake work.

3. *Engine oil.* Engine oil is generally changed once every three months or 3,000 miles, whichever comes first.

4. *Radiator/Engine Coolant/Antifreeze.* This should be changed according to your owner’s manual.

5. *Transmission fluid.* Most vehicle manufacturers suggest changing this fluid every 15,000-30,000 miles.

6. *Power steering fluid.* Low fluid can mean the loss of power steering. Most manufacturers don’t have a scheduled maintenance for this fluid.

Check Your Tires

Spend a few minutes each month checking your tires:

1. *Inflate.* Check your owner’s manual or inside the driver-side doorjamb for inflation guidelines

specific to your car. Tires can lose one psi (pound per square inch) per month under normal conditions. Use a tire gauge for an accurate reading.

2. *Rotate.* Feel the tread of your tires. If you feel high and low areas or very smooth areas, you may have irregular tread wear. Proper tire rotation, alignment and balancing will help your tires last longer and provide a smoother, safer ride. For maximum mileage, rotate tires every 5,000 miles.

3. *Evaluate.* Be on the lookout for damage to your tires. If your tire looks worn or damaged, take it to a service center and have it checked out immediately.

Use Your Senses

Trust yourself and what you see, smell and hear.

1. *Look.* Watch for leaks under the car, or steam or smoke coming from the engine. Pay attention to dashboard warning lights.

2. *Smell.* Many fluids have their own unique odor. If you smell something unusual, you may have a leak.

3. *Listen.* Describe noises to your service technician as accurately as possible. Observe as many things as you can: when it’s happening, how fast you’re going, whether you’re applying the brakes or gas, turning left or right, is the car hot or cold, etc.

Stay Educated

Keep a copy of your vehicle manufacturer’s scheduled maintenance program handy. Firestone Tire & Service Centers offer these maintenance schedules for free and host free Car Care Clinics at locations around the country. Visit www.MasterCareUSA.com to find a clinic in your area or to schedule a service appointment.

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