

CURRY'S AUTO SERVICE

TIRE PROS

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Tips for Maintaining and Buying Replacement Tires

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With any season change, many people have questions about how to select the proper tire for their vehicle. If your tires are worn, under-inflated, or not suited to the local environment and your driving habits, you could be putting yourself and your family at risk. Tires are one of the most important safety features on cars since they are the vehicle's only contact with the road. Even the most advanced braking systems and anti-lock brakes cannot work as designed if the tires can't grip the road.

Here are some maintenance and buying tips to get the most life out of your tires:

1. First, perform a visual inspection to see if you need new tires. Rotate your tires out so you can see the whole tread area. Look for poor tread wear, cracked sidewall or bulges. If they are more than 5 years old, they should be professionally inspected and most likely need replacing.



Check the manufacturer's date on the sidewall to see when the tire was manufactured. This is included in the Department of Transportation (DOT) number that is embossed on the tire. For example, in the last section of the DOT number, the very last two digits indicate the year the tire was manufactured and the preceding two digits represent the week. The DOT numbers are used by the Department of Transportation to help track the tire in case of a recall. To test the tread, insert a penny in the grooves with Abe Lincoln's head down. If the tread does not cover his hairline, it's time to get new tires. The rule in Virginia is when any part of the tire is less than 2/32 of an inch at two adjacent grooves in three equally spaced locations (for a total of six measurements), it is worn beyond the safe and legal limit.

2. Buy tires to match your driving habits as well as the driving conditions in your area. For Northern Virginia that means lots of stop-and-go traffic, which will wear the rubber down faster. Tires that run at higher speeds for long distances will also tend to wear out faster than those who drive shorter distances. Also, potholed-filled roads will add stress to your tires. There are a variety of tires to address different responsiveness, longwearing or road handling conditions. It's a good idea to talk with your tires sales associate to make sure you select the right one for your needs.
3. Consider how long you are going to keep the car. If you plan to keep your car for several years, you might want to spend a little more money for a tire with longer tread wear. While it may be more expensive upfront, it will be a better value in terms of price-per-mile. And a tire with a higher tread wear rating may also improve your gas mileage due to lower rolling resistance.
4. Always keep your tires properly inflated. Improper inflation can cause uneven tread wear, shorten lifespan and decrease your car's responsiveness. Check the door jam for the placard containing the manufacturer's recommendation. Keep in mind that most American manufacturers recommend a "softer" ride and a tire that is at the lower limits of its inflation. Adding a pound or

two of air will give you a “harder” ride, but will let you “feel” the road and increase responsiveness. Use a good quality tire gauge and do it when the tires are cold for the most accurate reading.

5. Make sure you use nitrogen to fill your tires, which will maintain a more uniform pressure in your tires for a longer period and will extend the life of your tire. It’s OK to mix air and nitrogen if you need to add a couple of pounds. You also may want to ask for a “purge” the next time your car is in for maintenance where they’ll take out the air and replacing it with nitrogen. Also, most people often overlook to check the pressure in the spare tire.
6. Rotate and balance your tires according to the manufacturer’s recommendation so your tires will wear evenly and perform well. This should be done every time you get your oil changed or about every 3,000 to 5,000 miles and should include an air pressure check. Road force wheel balancing is the technology used to match the tire and wheel assembly to achieve the lowest rolling resistance and road force variance. Taking advantage of this type of balancing will give you longer tread life, a smoother ride and better gas mileage.
7. Maintain proper wheel alignment. Alignment refers to how the wheels are positioned on the axel and is directly related to the vehicle’s suspension and steering. It must be adjusted with the purchase of a new tire or after a major road hazard (i.e. hitting a curb, potholes, etc.) Under normal conditions, check the alignment every year and/or every 12,000 miles. Tires that are out of alignment will wear prematurely and will have poor performance.
8. When replacing less than four tires, always replace them with the same model and brand. Mismatched tires can cause awkward handling or pulling to one side due to the fact that all tires are made with different compounds, tread design and internal construction. Optimally, all tires should be replaced at the same time.
9. When you are shopping for new tires, make sure you compare “like” services. Many tires have extras that are not included in the price: installation, shipping, mounting, valve stems, nitrogen fill, alignment and recycling. These can all add significantly to the total cost. Often, a package that includes all these will be less expensive. Look for packages that have warranties and free lifetime road hazard coverage that could save you money in the end.
10. Allow about 500 miles of break-in time for new tires. A lubricant used in the manufacturing process can leave a residue on the tread of new tires that may cause less grip in those first 500 miles. So, it’s best to try to avoid hard cornering or quick breaking early on that will put more stress on your new tires.

About Curry’s Auto Service

With five convenient locations throughout Northern Virginia, Curry’s Auto Service is one of the largest independent auto service and repair shops in the area with locations in Arlington, Chantilly, Falls Church, Gainesville and Reston/Great Falls. In November 2009, Curry’s Auto Service was named one of the top 3 shops nationwide in the *2009 Top Shop Awards* presented by *Tire Review Magazine* and the only auto repair facility in Virginia to receive the *AskPatty Certified Female Friendly Facility* designation. Contact Curry’s Auto Service at 1-888-8CURRYS or visit our website at www.currysauto.com.