

For information on
AAA's Safe Driving
for Mature Operators
Driver Improvement Program,
contact your local AAA club.

STRAIGHT TALK for **Mature Drivers**

AAA's Mature Drivers series:

- ▼ Meeting the Challenge
- ▼ Buying a Vehicle
- ▼ Good Vision ...
Vital to Good Driving
- ▼ Maintaining Your Vehicle
- ▼ Rx for Safe Driving



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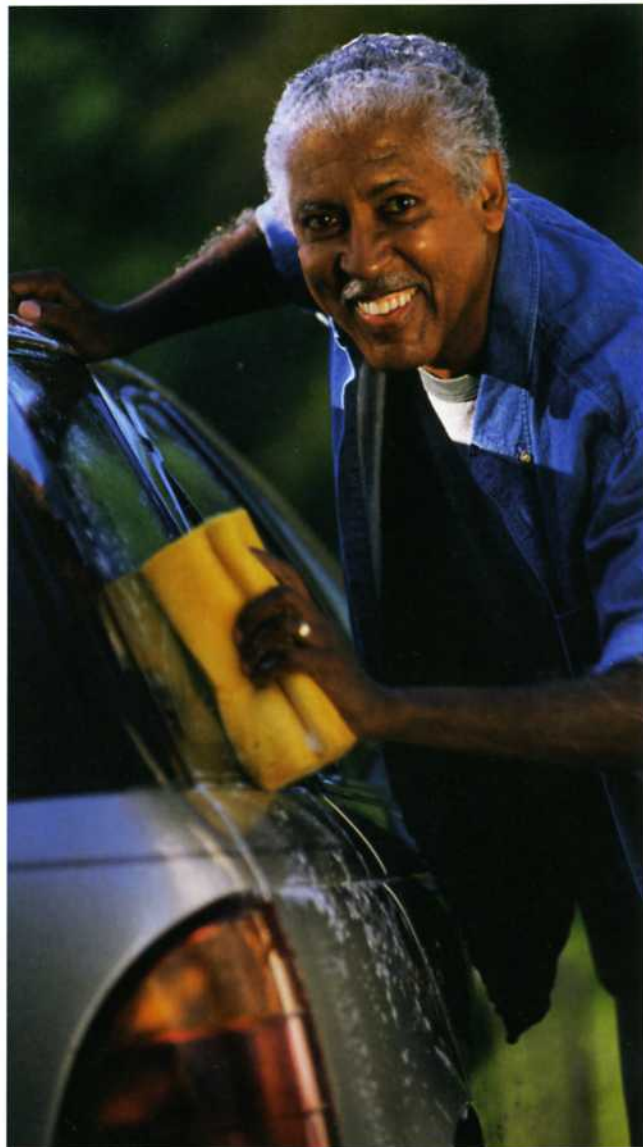
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STRAIGHT TALK for **Mature Drivers**

Maintaining Your Vehicle



Good Maintenance Promotes Safety

By 2030, nearly 70 million Americans will be 65 or older — and at least 90 percent of them will still be driving. We can't reverse the effects of aging, but good vehicle maintenance can help protect mature drivers and keep them comfortable in their vehicles.

Follow the tips in this brochure to keep your car running smoothly and help ensure your safety on the road. If you aren't sure how to do some of the things advised here, have an automotive expert do them for you.



More than Oil Changes

Many drivers think maintenance equals oil changes. But it is much more than that. Vehicle maintenance includes keeping every part of your vehicle in good working order, including tires, mirrors, windows and, of course, the engine.

Driving Habits Determine Maintenance Needs

The way you drive can affect the kind of maintenance your vehicle needs.

- ▼ A vehicle driven primarily on the highway can go longer between oil changes than one used for stop-and-go trips around town.
- ▼ Hard acceleration with a cold engine can increase engine wear.
- ▼ Stay aware of traffic ahead and maintain a constant speed. Repeatedly pressing the gas and brake pedals on and off reduces fuel economy and creates needless wear and tear on the brakes, transmission and suspension.

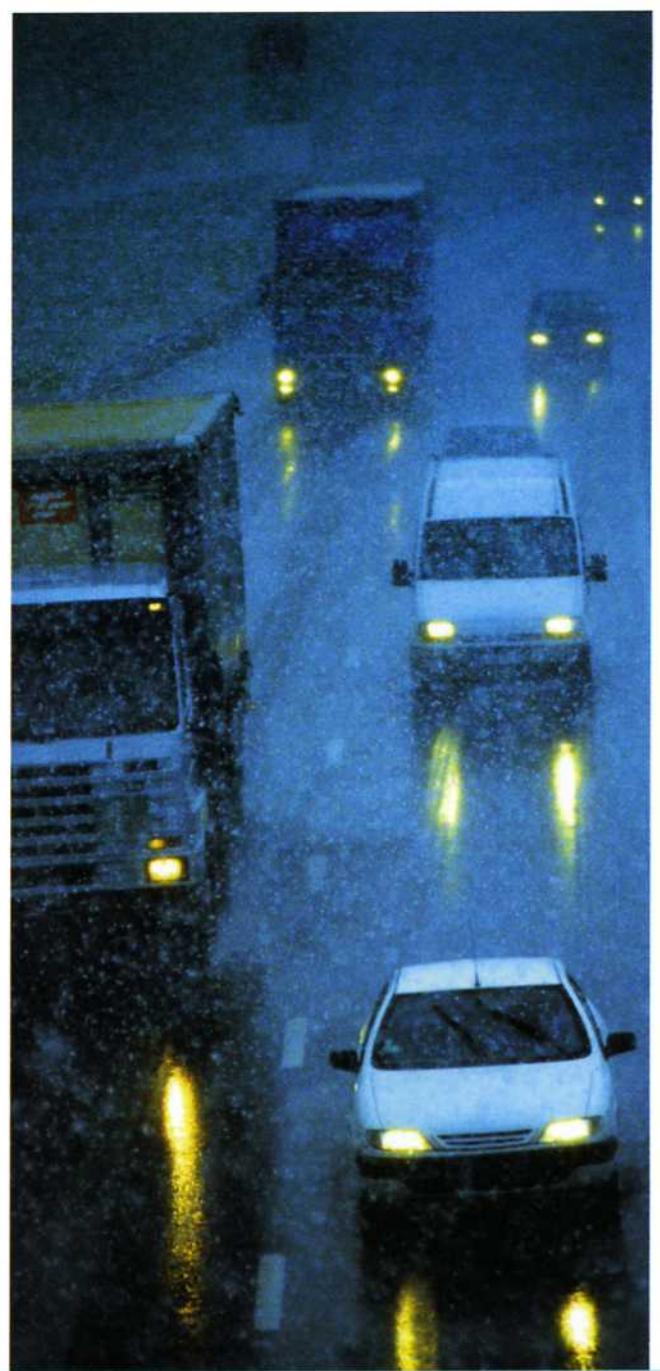
Where you drive can also affect maintenance. If you drive on dusty roads, for example, you may need to change your air filter more often.

***The better the mechanical condition
of your car, the better your
gas mileage will be.***

Climate Control

These tips will help you keep your vehicle in good running condition in any kind of weather.

- ▼ Modern coolants protect the inside of your engine from rust and corrosion. Always maintain the proper level of anti-freeze, even if you live in a warm climate. Change the coolant at the intervals specified by your vehicle's manufacturer.
- ▼ Check your windshield for dings. Freezing weather and a warm vehicle interior can cause "thermal shock," which may turn small dings into large cracks. If caught early enough, small "bullseye" chips can be repaired before they grow and your entire windshield has to be replaced.
- ▼ In cooler weather, tires can lose a pound of pressure for every 10-degree drop in temperature.
- ▼ Make sure all your vehicle's lights work so you can see and be seen at night and in a storm or fog.
- ▼ Make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition so you can see clearly during storms. If it snows frequently where you live, consider buying winter wiper blades that have a protective rubber boot over the frame to prevent snow and ice from becoming lodged there.
- ▼ As winter approaches, consider switching to oil and other fluids recommended for winter use.
- ▼ Never attempt to jump-start a weak battery that has frozen.



Make sure all your vehicle's lights work so you can see and be seen at night and in a storm or fog.

Take Care of Your Vehicle

Following these maintenance tips could help keep your car on the road for years to come.

- ▼ Check battery cable connections regularly. They should be tight, with no corrosion on the terminals. Remove corrosion with a toothbrush dipped in a paste of baking soda and water.
- ▼ Replace or recharge a weak battery as soon as you can, because it increases wear on your alternator and starter.
- ▼ If the battery is not sealed, check the water level. If it is low, add distilled water — not tap water.
- ▼ Many cars use air conditioning to defrost windows. Run the air conditioner every few weeks, even in winter, to ensure seals in the system remain lubricated.
- ▼ Apply and release the parking brake regularly to make sure cables do not rust, corrode and/or seize.
- ▼ Have your tires rotated every 7,500 to 10,000 miles. This can add up to 10,000 miles to the life of the tires.
- ▼ If you feel a “shimmy” or vibration at highway speeds, have your tires balanced and suspension checked.
- ▼ Make sure tires are inflated to the recommended level. Proper pressures can be found in the owner’s manual or on a tire information decal usually found on a door jamb or inside the fuel filler door. Proper inflation will save wear and tear on the tires and improve fuel mileage.
- ▼ Keep maintenance records and follow your vehicle manufacturer’s maintenance recommendations.

Doing What You’ve Always Done ... May Be Wrong

Regular checks and preventive maintenance are good habits that keep your vehicle operating safely. However, newer models may require care on a different schedule from your old routine. Oil changes are a good example. Check your owner’s manual to see how often the manufacturer recommends oil changes. With newer vehicles, the “3,000 miles or 3 months” rule may not apply.



Looking Good Under the Hood

Your vehicle warranty outlines required maintenance. The following tips will help you know what to do and when to do it — but the ultimate resource is your owner's manual.

- ▼ At each refueling, check fluid levels, including window washer fluid.
- ▼ Check tire pressure at least once a month.
- ▼ Use fuel with the octane level recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.
- ▼ Change oil as recommended in your owner's manual, using the weight and grade of oil it recommends. Avoid oil additives — some do more harm than good.
- ▼ Examine radiator hoses for bulges, cracks or leaks.
- ▼ Periodically check the air filter for accumulated dirt.
- ▼ Be sure your service provider uses a torque wrench when tightening lug nuts. Over-tightening the nuts can warp brake rotors and make the brake pedal pulsate.
- ▼ Look for cracks or looseness in engine belts. Broken belts are a major reason for roadside breakdowns.
- ▼ Keep battery terminals clean and check the battery's fluid level. If possible, add distilled water to bring the electrolyte solution back to the proper level.
- ▼ Routinely check headlights, brake and parking lights, backup lights and turn signals.
- ▼ Your vehicle should be put on a service lift at least once a year to check for damage from road hazards.

Looking Good on the Road

- ▼ If possible, keep your vehicle garaged to protect it from the weather. If you must park outside, park so your vehicle faces a different direction every day or use a dashboard-protecting sunscreen.
- ▼ Skip under-the-hood cleaning of your engine. It looks good, but could severely damage sensitive electronic components and wiring.
- ▼ Don't overdo the spit and polish, but keep the vehicle clean, inside and out. To keep your vehicle thoroughly clean:
 - Vacuum and shampoo or spot-clean the carpet.
 - Apply a leather or vinyl protector to the interior parts using a clean terrycloth towel.
 - Wash untinted windows with a household glass cleaner. Use a mixture of white vinegar and water on tinted windows.
 - Use a nonabrasive cleaner.
 - Choose a car wash that does not use rotary brushes.
 - Wash your car in a shaded area.
 - Use insect and tar remover to clean deposits from the grille and wheels.
 - Raise the hood and trunk when drying to remove water from the edges.
 - Move your car to a shady spot after it dries and wax the surface. Remove wax with a terrycloth towel.
 - Use a soft brush to remove wax from around trim. Finish polishing with small circular strokes.

Choose the Right Service

The shop you visit for maintenance doesn't have to be the shop you go to for repairs. Routine maintenance does not require the sophisticated equipment and highly skilled technicians that translate to higher labor costs. But do take your vehicle to a diagnostic center for an annual inspection. Look for a center that specializes in diagnosing problems — not selling parts.

Some AAA clubs offer members low-cost diagnostic services or can recommend approved vehicle care providers. Ask your AAA club to recommend Approved Auto Repair centers near you.



Your Club Can Help

Your AAA club may be a valuable resource for maintenance help. Some clubs:

- ▼ Operate vehicle care centers.
- ▼ Offer annual “car check” inspections by AAA-approved auto repair staff.
- ▼ Provide AAA’s battery service, a mobile service that can test and replace batteries 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Aids for Senior Drivers

AAA has developed these services to help older drivers.

- ▼ **AAA Roadwise Review® CD:** Roadwise Review is an easy-to-use interactive computer program that helps you identify changes in your driving that could put you at risk. This CD is available from AAA and makes it easy to assess your driving abilities in the privacy of your home.
- ▼ **A Good “Fit”:** Ensuring your vehicle is a good “fit” is critical to your safety. AAA offers a brochure called *CarFit: Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Perfect Fit*, which features tips for adjusting your vehicle to meet your changing physical needs, ease the stress of driving and maximize safety.
- ▼ **A Strong Foundation:** Working with AAA clubs, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety identifies traffic safety problems, fosters research to seek solutions and disseminates information and educational materials. For more information, access www.seniordrivers.org.