

# Take time for auto maintenance



BY JEANA BABCOCK

When my children were younger, they were dependent on me to care for their basic needs. I assumed as they became more independent, I would have more free time. What made me think that? I am busier than I've

ever been! Besides the normal “mom stuff” of cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, etc., my time is eaten up chauffeuring my kids everywhere—sporting practices/games, fishing holes, malls, work ... and on and on. I sometimes wonder how moms kept track of things before smartphones were invented. My phone is where my lists, calendars and alarms direct every one of my days. Have you jumped on the smartphone train? Are your days guided and organized with your handy device? What kinds of apps do you have to aid in your efforts to keep everything straight? With all that you need to keep sorted, do you take time to add reminders to care for one of your most important investments—your vehicle? Or do you rely on your memory and the little oil change sticker in your window? When was the last time you looked at your maintenance log?

As I have pointed out in the past, April is National Car Care month. This is a season to take time to make sure we are giving our vehicles the TLC they deserve so they will perform to the best of their abilities and provide us and our families with safe transportation. Proper car upkeep takes more than keeping gas in the tank and changing the oil regularly. Maintenance schedules are extensive as there are so many systems to consider. Are you following yours? There's not enough room in one article to touch on every system, so let's just look at some that are often forgotten or skipped. I'll give you general guidelines for replacement but it's always best to consult your owner's manual for specifics for your vehicle.

## FUEL FILTER

Do you like grounds in your coffee? Of course not! Likewise, your vehicle's injectors don't like impurities to get through this important filter and clog them. Eventually it's so full



of gunk that it needs to be replaced. Replace every two years or 24,000 miles.

## AIR FILTER

Close your mouth and breath out of your nose. Doable, right? Now, what if it's allergy season or you have a cold and your nose is all stuffed up— isn't this a lot harder? It's the same for your vehicle. The air your engine needs come through this important filter. It gets “stuffed up” with contaminants from the air and requires replacement yearly. Also be aware of other maintenance for this system including the PCV valve and oxygen sensor.

## AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION FLUID (ATF) AND FILTER

ATF is to the transmission what oil is to the engine in terms of function and importance. It keeps safe operating temps and fights friction. Getting an ATF flush and filter change every two years or 24,000 miles will help keep your transmission in optimal health.

as antifreeze and coolant and guards against corrosion in the cooling system. It's great to have one fluid perform so many functions so it is critical that you ensure its integrity and replacement on a regular basis—as it works, its potency diminishes and it becomes dirty. When replaced every two years or 24,000 miles or topped off in between flushes, it's important to make sure the replacement fluids meet the requirement your vehicle needs.

## BRAKES

I am sure the amount I write about this topic is enough to drive my readers crazy. But repetition may just keep you or others aware of this important safety issue—and prevent your car or others on the road from failing to stop because your brakes are overlooked or not replaced when recommended. Your brake fluid needs to be assessed periodically and flushed every two years or 24,000 miles. Your brakes need to be inspected on a regular basis and when you notice a problem. There are many components that need to be assessed and replaced before they become a safety hazard. Take a break for your brakes this month to make sure they will keep you safe.

There are so many other areas of maintenance I have not touched on here—tires, oil, power steering, alignments, etc. Your car manufacturer has developed a “cheat sheet” of sorts by providing you with a schedule for your maintenance. But they can't pull it out of your glove box and make you do everything that is recommended. The excuses I hear to not keep up on vehicle maintenance are many—time, money and forgetting are at the top of the list. Perhaps now that I've given you a friendly reminder, you can grab your calendar—in whatever form you prefer (written or digital)—to remind yourself to take care of your vehicle. There are also apps you can install on your smartphone that can remind you or your auto-repair shop may send reminders via email or text. Reminders of any kind are easy to ignore—but when you know the importance of the service, you are more likely to schedule it and follow through.

*Article courtesy of Babcock Auto Care.*

## BATTERY

Many people ignore the battery until they notice an issue—either the battery light will come on or your car won't start. I don't know about you but I stress out if my car won't start—especially if there is somewhere I need to be—and according to my smartphone, unless I am sleeping at night there is always somewhere I need to be! Replacement is recommended every 48-60 months but your battery should also be tested and the terminals cleaned on a regular basis.

## COOLANT

Are you a multi-tasker? Most of the time, I am doing several things at one time. About a year ago, my husband convinced me how much I would like two screens for my computer. I was always hopping between tabs and programs. That second screen increased my productivity and my ability to multi-task. The coolant in your vehicle is a multi-tasker like me! It serves