

The condition of your tires is one of the most important mechanical factors in vehicle safety.

Here are four ways you can improve the safety and performance of your tires.

1. Keep tires properly inflated.

Check them at least monthly to notice if tire pressure appears to be getting low. Incorrect tire pressure can cause uneven tire wear, poor handling, excessive heat buildup, and possible tire failure. Check your vehicle manual for recommended tire pressures. If you have new tires installed, check their pressure. Recommended tire pressures can vary depending on the brand of tire. **When you check tire pressure, do so the first thing in the morning for an accurate reading.** Driving the car heats up the tires and changes their pressure.

2. Rotate tires to increase life.

Follow the rotation schedule in your car's owner's manual.

3. Keep tires balanced and aligned.

Improperly balanced tires can produce an uneven ride that can result in poor handling. Defective alignment can cause excessive tire wear and the vehicle to pull to the side.

4. Replace tires when the tread gets too low.

What is too low? All tires have "treadwear indicators" built right into them. These indicators are molded into the bottom of the tread grooves and will appear as "bands" when the tread depth reduces to the size of 1/16th of an inch.

When the indicators appear in two or more adjacent grooves, the tire should be replaced. Look in your vehicle's manual for more information. Usually the manual will have a picture showing what the tread wear indicators look like.

Look at your tires on a regular basis. Have a professional check them out further if you have any doubts about their safety.

Let's be safe out there!