

• YOUR CAR CARE GUIDE • YOUR CAR CARE GUIDE •

# Bouncy ride? Check your suspension

If you notice your tire tread "cupping" (which can cause a thumping noise) and the car is handling poorly, possibly giving you a bouncy ride, you may be ready for MacPherson struts, advises the Car Care Council of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada.

The MacPherson strut is not the traditional dance of a

Scottish clan; it's part of the suspension system found on most of today's smaller cars with front wheel drive.

Featuring a more compact design, the strut combines, in a single unit, the shock absorber, the upper control arm of the suspension and, in some cases, the chassis spring.

An alternative design to

the conventional shock absorber, the strut generally has a somewhat longer life expectancy. Service or replacement, however, is a more expensive procedure. This is because the strut itself is a major component of the suspension system.

According to the Car Care Council, the best way to determining whether or not

your car's struts or shock absorbers still are serviceable is to have the vehicle inspected on a hoist by a professional mechanic. A visual examination of the parts, along with a test of their mechanical integrity, will help determine the need for replacement.

Because these parts do wear out gradually, it sometimes is difficult to realize they may have deteriorated. However, when driving or stopping on a "washboard" surface or when negotiating a tight turn on a rough road, worn shocks or struts soon will become apparent. The situation becomes dangerous when the wheels begin bouncing off the ground and the driver loses control of the car.

The Car Care Council advises that shock absorbers and struts be replaced in pairs. If the car originally was equipped with the new gas-filled shocks, be sure to replace them with units of the same type.

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## Keeping car cosy in the cold

Do you hear a chirping or screeching sound when you turn on your car heater? This noise, most prevalent in cold weather, usually comes from a worn bearing in the fan motor. It's an indication of pending failure.

This is just one of the many parts we take for granted until, usually too late, we discover they were calling for attention. That's when the cold ride to work becomes misery.

Most of this discomfort and inconvenience can be avoided by being more aware of pending failure of a heating system component, says Car Care Canada of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada.

In addition to the fan or blower motor, other components of the system which may give warning signals of failure are:

- The heater control valve, which may become sticky or inoperative. You're likely to notice stiffness in the panel control lever.
- The heater core, a miniature radiator which, like its bigger brother at the front of

the engine, eventually may seep or leak. Your first tip-off will be an accumulation of moisture inside the car, where even defrosters won't help.

• Heater and defroster hoses carry fresh air into the system and warmed air to locations beyond the heater core. When they're leaking, you'll lose heating/defrosting efficiency.

• Heater hoses are the smaller hoses in the cooling system that direct the hot coolant from the engine to the heater core. A leaking heater hose goes beyond simple discomfort and can ultimately leave you stranded on the side of the road.

Because of the safety aspects of driving comfort and clear vision, the heating/defrost system is a vitally important part of the vehicle and should be taken seriously when failure is indicated. Be alert to early warning signs such as inefficient heating or defrosting, unusual noises or smells.

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