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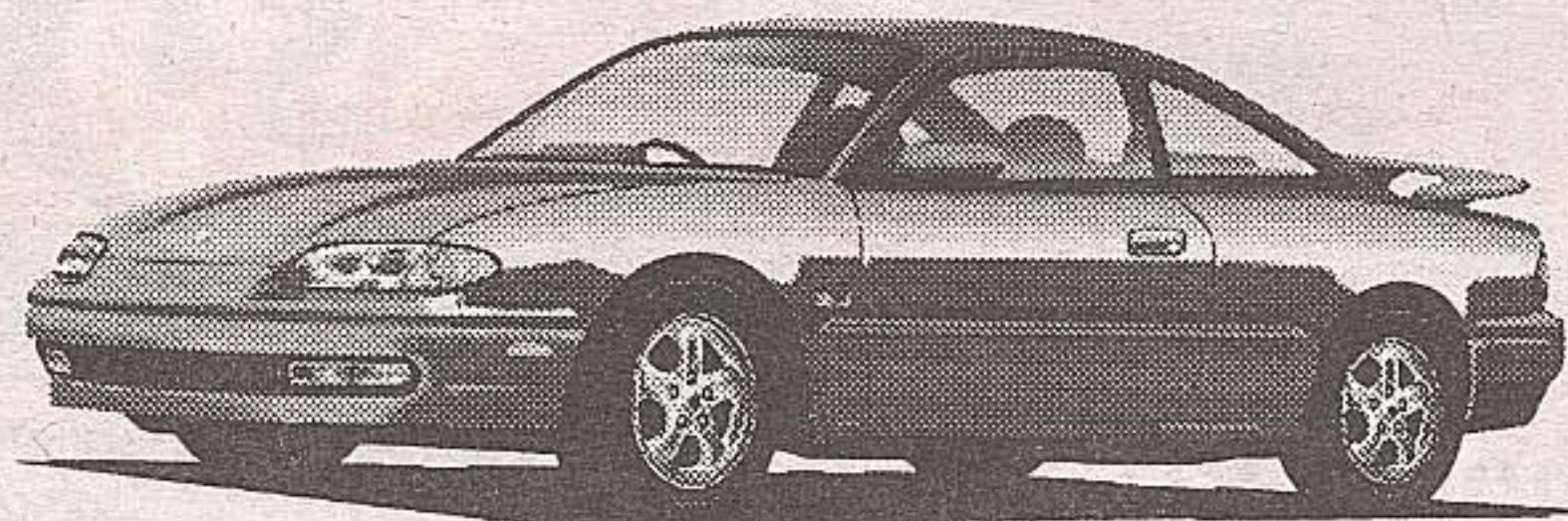
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Five tire tips for spring driving

A little preventative tire care makes it easy to maintain proper vehicle control and safety throughout the spring and summer, and will help you get the longest possible life out of your tires, too.

According to tire specialist Jud Buchanan, tire maintenance is comprised of five elements, most of which can be done by yourself:

1) Check your air pressure: The simplest and most important aspect of proper tire maintenance is correct air pressure. Over or under inflated tires result in irregular wear, lack of proper vehicle control, poor fuel economy, "mushy" steering and even tire failure.

The proper tire pressure settings for your vehicle can be found on the driver's door post, glove box lid or in the owner's manual. As a rule of thumb, tires have a natural tendency to lose about one pound per square inch (psi) each month.

Buchanan suggests you check the pressure every four to six weeks. (Purchase a quality tire pressure gauge, about \$10—the ones on the service station air hose are rarely accurate.)

2) You can inspect your own tires: While you're still at the service station, look over the tire for irregular tread wear, stones lodged in the tread, punctures or other exterior damages, as well as the amount of tread remaining.

To check the tread depth, locate the "wear bars" by using the arrows on the tire sidewall near the edge of the tread as a guide. These wear bars are in the main tread grooves between the tread ribs or blocks. The tire must be legally replaced if the tread is the same height or lower than any wear bar.

3) Rotate your tires regularly: Tires

should be rotated every 10,000 to 15,000 kilometres. If your vehicle was in tip top shape, including proper suspension alignment, and you only drove in a straight line on a flat surface, all of your tires would wear at about the same rate. In the real world you apply unlimited combinations of cornering, braking, accelerating and loading forces on the vehicle, which result in different wear rates and wear patterns on the tires. Tire rotations simply even out this wear and allow the tires to provide better control and longer life.

4) Be aware of alignment and balancing: Tread wear and vehicle control are also affected by wheel alignment and tire balancing. The suspension components of your vehicle are the most used and frequently the most abused part of the vehicle. Rough roads, potholes and everyday wear and tear can alter the alignment of the wheels.

5) Talk to a tire professional: If you want tire service done by experts, take your vehicle to a tire specialist. A good way to find a tire professional is to ask your friends or co-workers for recommendations. As Buchanan points out, if the sinks were backing up in your house you wouldn't call an electrician.

Find a tire professional that's handy to home or work and check out their facilities. Look for one that sells several brands of tires so when you need new ones there will be a selection to choose from. A professional shop will not only know what they're talking about, they'll also have modern mounting and balancing equipment, plus a suspension alignment rack.

—Information provided by
Yokohama Tire (Canada)

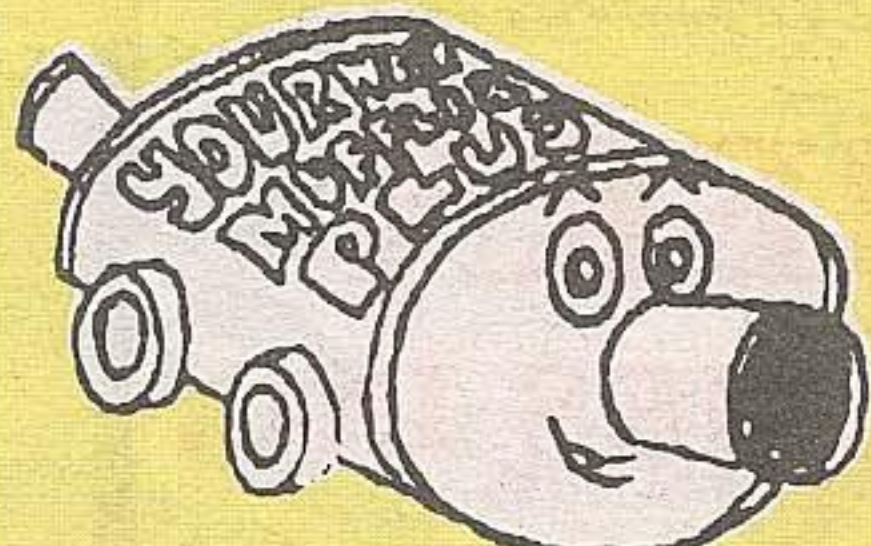


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