

Here's why proper tyre care should never be overlooked



By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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We have all heard of those accidents that occur purely out of defective or tyres that are in poor condition. Tyres are generally overlooked when it comes to maintenance, yet the flip side of that coin should be that caring and maintaining your vehicle's tyres should be the first box to tick.



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Whilst driving, the part of any tyre is the size of your palm. I often get asked this question: "How long do my car tyres last?". The answer to that is not clear cut as there are so many factors one has to take into consideration. And it also depends on whether you have conventional tyres or the 'run flats' that are fitted as a standard purchase when you buy a new vehicle.

I have never been a fan of 'run flats'. I find them a tad too hard for a smooth ride, whilst the conventional tube and tyre is more forgiving, especially over bumpy roads. And they cost much lesser than 'run flats'. No one can ever probably answer the question, simply because there are a lot of factors that influence the lifespan of your tyres.

Potholes

We do not always drive on smooth and perfect roads. It is a given fact that we come across many potholes in our daily commutes. Bad roads greatly influence how long our tyres will last. Potholes can be a tyre's killer.

Imagine driving at say 100kmph and you 'hit' a nasty pothole. The damage to the tyre could be huge to the extent that the tyre will deflate, sometimes very slowly. But I have known instances where the tyre ruptures to an extent that it needs replacing to continue your journey. God forbids when you are driving in darkness and on a lesser travelled road.

Always be on the lookout for potholes and keep in mind the traffic behind and in front of you when slowing down to avoid potholes and other road impediments.

A fine balancing act

Want a longer tyre life? We all do. But a contributing aspect is that your set of tyres must be balanced and wheel aligned to Original Equipment Manufacturer specifications. You will probably find out much later than anticipated that your vehicles wheel alignment is out of specification and the tyres out of balance.



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Ideally, and as part of routine vehicle checks, tyres would be rotated and balanced once every 10,000kms or thereabouts. Remember that the aim of balancing tyres is to distribute weight equally around the circumference of the tyre. Tyres that are out of balanced cause vibrations on the steering wheel.

Also, misaligned wheels result in premature wear of other components like wheel bearings, steering components, suspension and of course, the tyres themselves.

Type Pressure Monitor (TPM)

I have a little 'gadget' that I regularly attach to the valve of my tyres that gives me an approximate reading of pressure. But once every filling at my local petrol station, I check the pressure again and this must be in accordance with manufacturers specifications.

The correct gauge can be found in the vehicle's handbook or on the inside of the door panel. Also, take cognisance of the load that you will be carrying and inflate or deflate accordingly. It's best to check the correct gauge of the tyres when they are cold. Many accidents are caused because tyres are not properly inflated.

Thread depth

Thread depth is also a very vital aspect when it comes to the general maintenance of tyres. There are many times that I thought the depth of the thread was sufficient, only to be told that it is below acceptable specifications. It's more than what the eye meets. The thread of the tyre is what grips the road as you drive. Lesser thread equals lesser grip and this is what causes aquaplaning as you go slip-sliding all over the place.

Braking time is also negatively compromised. New tyres have a thread depth of between 8-10mm. This obviously decreases concomitantly to the kilometres that you clock up. Any thread below 1.6mm starts lacking proper grip and considered illegal and the tyre must be replaced to avoid any accidents or fines by respective traffic authorities.

Take care of your tyres and they will take care of you.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

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