

## **Car Care Tips**

By Dave Carney

### The “Skinny” on Shocks & Struts

Although we seldom think about shock absorbers, they are a vitally important safety item and they play a major role in how your car rides, handles, and brakes.

Shock absorbers stabilize the ride so that it is nice and smooth even though the wheels may be going up and down due to bumps or potholes in the road. Every car has four shock absorbers; one is mounted vertically on the suspension behind each wheel.

The way the shock works is, a piston inside the shock slides up and down in a column of oil, compressing and expanding thousands of times each mile. The firmness or softness of the ride is determined by the amount of oil flowing through holes from one side of the piston to the other. The larger the hole, the more oil flow, and the softer the ride. Conversely, the smaller the hole, the less oil flow, and the firmer the ride.

How to maintain the shocks on your car in order to maximize their longevity? The answer is there is NO maintenance required for shocks. Shocks last for as long as they are designed to last. Generally, more expensive cars have more expensive shocks and they may never need replacing. A lower end car may need shocks as early as 30,000-miles.

How do you know if your car needs new shocks? You need new shock absorbers when:

- 1) you go over a bump and the car keeps bouncing
- 2) your car has too much lateral motion
- 3) your tires exhibit a scallop-patterned wear pattern, called “cupping” in the industry
- 4) the shock is leaking oil

***Of course, the most scientific test used in the industry to test the shocks is to put a knee on the bumper and bounce the car!***

Which shock absorbers to buy?

On a recent visit to the Auto Parts store I discovered seven different brands and price ranges of shock absorbers on the shelf. Wow! I had no idea that the spectrum of shocks was so broad. Be sure to choose a quality manufacturer and make your selection from

the top three. DO spend the extra money for quality shocks. And, ALWAYS replace shocks in pairs.

Questions? Please feel free to give me a call at Hillside Automotive, 310/373-7676. Our Automotive Center is located on the corners of Hawthorne Blvd., and Newton Street in Torrance. Our six ASE-certified technicians are at your service Monday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. All auto repairs are AAA-approved and guaranteed.

Safe, happy motoring!

Dave Carney