

## How Do I Know When To Change My Tires?

Although you might not think it, tires are among the most important parts on your vehicle. They can impact ride comfort, handling, safety, and even fuel economy. And since your tires are the only part of your vehicle that comes in contact with the road, you will need to replace them more often than other parts. No one wants to get caught with a flat tire on the side of the road, so if you think it might be time to replace your tires, follow these tips.

### Inspect For Splits, Punctures, and Bulges

These are the most visible indicators that it is time to change your tires. If you notice any unusual cracks, blisters, or other weak spots on your tire's sidewall, this is an indicator that your tire may be close to blowing out.

### How To Know When Your Tread Is Too Low

Typically, new tires have a tread depth of 5/16ths of an inch. Once the tread on your tire has worn down past 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch, your tire has lost too much tread to remain effective. At this point, it becomes dangerous to continue to drive on that tire, especially on wet roads. There are a couple different ways to test your tires' tread depth.

1. Measure the tread depth with a tread depth gauge.
2. If you don't have a tread depth gauge, use a penny. Insert the coin head down into the tire tread. If the top of Lincoln's head is visible, then the tire needs to be replaced.
3. Look inside the grooves of your tire. You will find several raised rubber bars running perpendicular to the direction of the tread. These are called wear bars or tire wear indicators. Most tires have them in six different spots. When these bars become level with your tread, that's the sign you need to change your tires.
4. Bring your car into an auto service center and ask a technician to check your tread depth for you.

Most manufacturers recommend rotating your tires every 5,000 miles to delay wear and prolong the life of your tires. Whenever you rotate your tires, you should also check for damage and excessive wear, and replace as necessary.

### Seasons/Seasonality

Another reason you may want to change your tires is because of the changing of the seasons. Each variety has its pros and cons you should take into consideration when buying new tires.

### **All-Season Tires**

These are the most popular variety of tires. They provide decent wet and dry traction, making them a solid option for around-year use. They have long tread life and function well in light winter conditions. However, they aren't as effective at cornering or braking as summer tires, and are less effective on ice than winter tires.

### **Winter Tires**

Winter tires are made of a special rubber compound designed to remain flexible in extreme cold. Additionally, they have deeper treads with patterns designed to channel off snow and slush and keep traction on ice. For this reason, winter tires are the best choice for driving through thick snow or on black ice. Make sure to change them out when the snow melts, however, as winter tires will wear down faster on hot pavement.

### **Summer Tires**

Summer tires are designed for speed and maneuverability. They have fewer grooves to provide more direct contact with the road. This increases cornering and braking ability, but also means they wear down faster. If you own a sports car, opt for summer tires for the best performance.