

National Car Care Month: Six Reasons Why Proper Vehicle Maintenance Is Important

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Keeping your vehicle well maintained is one of the best things that can be done to help keep it on the road for years to come. Many drivers might not realize the impact [regular maintenance](#) can make on the longevity and performance of their vehicles.

Outside of oil changes and checking tire tread, there are a lot of things a trained mechanic (especially a Toyota service pro) will know to look for that could otherwise go unnoticed. So, this National Car Care Month, drivers should schedule that service appointment they may have been putting off.

The manager of Service Operations at Toyota Motor North America's (TMNA) corporate headquarters — and self-proclaimed “gear head” — Joe Clarke has been working on vehicles since he was 13 years old. And after 25 years in TMNA's service department, he's seen a lot. Here are some of his top tips for showing your vehicle some love:

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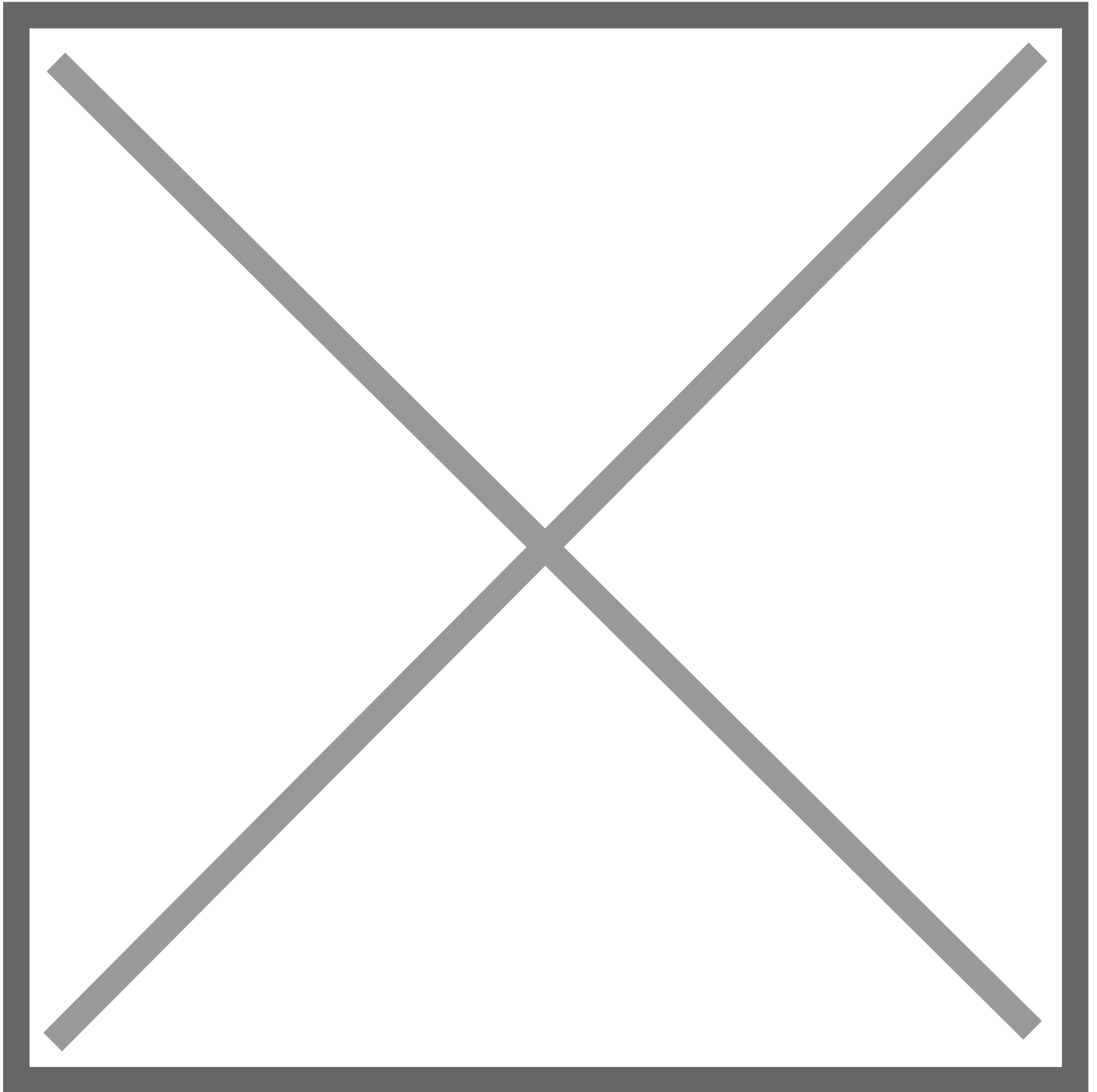


Minimize time between service appointments

Drivers are likely familiar with the little stickers they find on their windshield after service. But most drivers don't recognize that the dates scribbled on them are the absolute *longest* they should wait for their next check-up. Ideally, drivers would take their vehicles in for service well ahead of that date. How often depends on the vehicle, the driving conditions (see more about that below) and many other factors. Drivers should consult their maintenance guides — usually provided in their vehicle manuals — for the best estimate. Toyota owners can find their manuals and warranties on the [Toyota website](#).

Don't ignore the little things

A squeaky noise coming from under the hood, a small puddle of liquid left in a parking spot or a less than totally cool air conditioner are all examples of little things a driver might notice and not think twice about. However, these small signals can be an initial indicator that something isn't right. Oftentimes, catching small repairs early can prevent a much costlier repair in the future.



Big things matter too

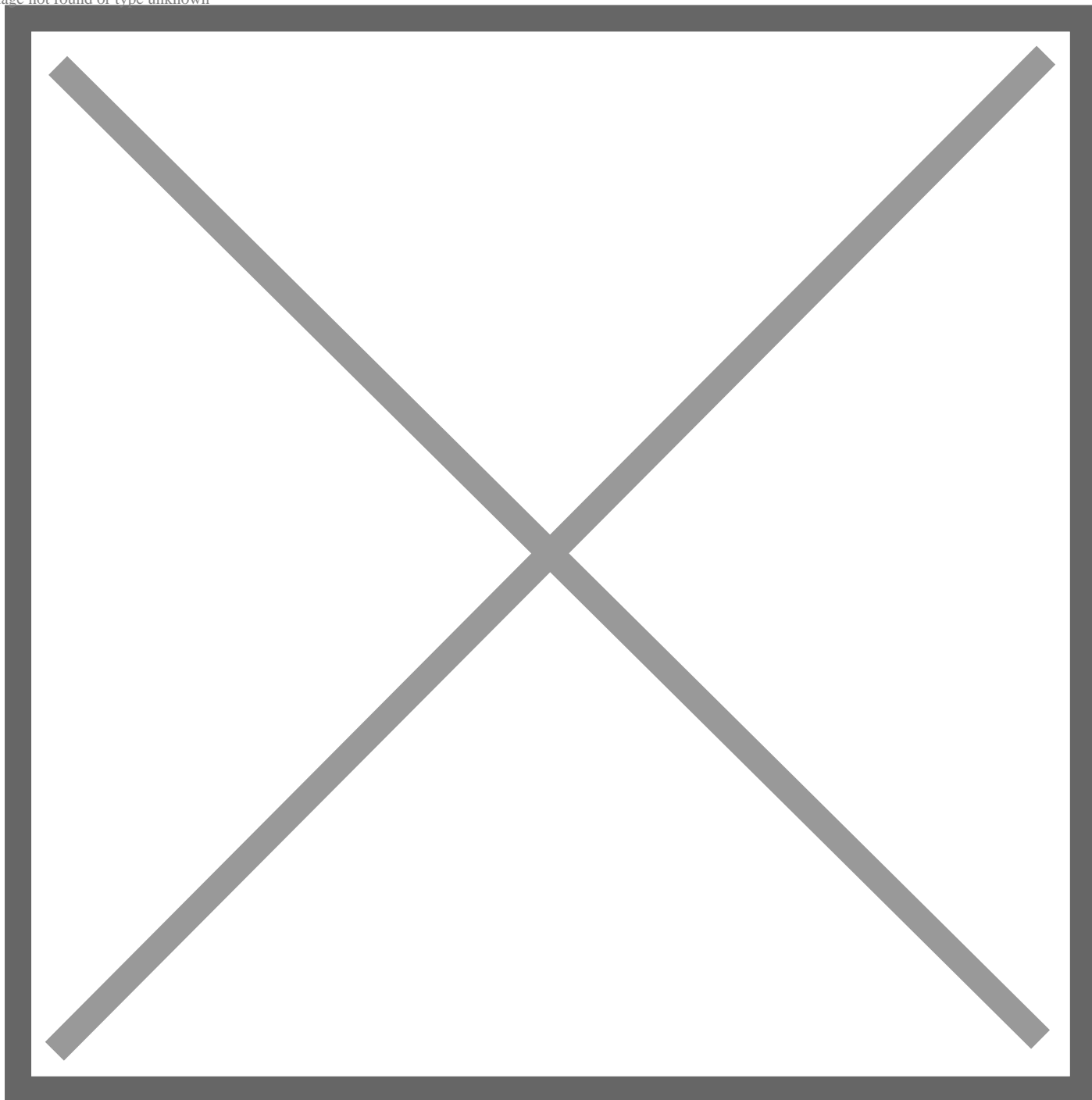
If the little things can be costly down the road, it should be obvious that the big things can too. If a driver ever notices any lack of basic functionality — like an accelerator that isn't working *just* right, or abnormal loud sounds — they need to immediately have the vehicle checked by a service professional. If an untrained eye, ear or nose can tell something is wrong, take it to the pros for a look as soon as possible.

Vehicles with adventurous drivers might need a little *extra* love

It's no secret that different drivers have different driving habits — and some like to live life on the adventurous side. Drivers who take their 4Runners off-road or hit the track with their GR86, for example, may need maintenance more often than those who only drive their Sienna to work and after-school activities. There are a lot of factors that will impact what maintenance needs look like and how often it's needed. It is best to consult the vehicle manual's excessive use section and discuss driving habits with a service professional during regular maintenance appointments to allow them to know what items to inspect more closely.

Other driving conditions that qualify as excessive and extreme are frequently towing a trailer and driving on rough or mountainous roads. Clarke mentioned that even taking short trips like to and from the grocery store or around the corner could be considered extreme driving conditions due to vehicle engines needing longer time to get up to the optimal operating temperature, especially in cold climate areas. If drivers are familiar with these conditions, they may need to care for their vehicle more frequently than the average driver.

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Monitor tire inflation for savings at the pump

Maintenance often comes with some built-in savings down the road, but there is one way you might see savings right away: improved gas mileage. According to the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), maintenance (like making sure tires are properly inflated) can improve fuel economy by 6%. For drivers who travel long distances, that can mean savings of hundreds of dollars (or more!) per year. That's just one example of how proper and regular maintenance can help save some money.

Maintain your vehicle to appeal to others later

When drivers are finally ready to move on from their current vehicle, they'll want to make sure to get the best possible resale price. Proper maintenance plays a big part in that. Vehicles that are regularly maintained — in some cases — can be in even better condition than a vehicle with fewer miles. Whether selling to a dealership through programs like the [Toyota Certified Used Vehicle program](#) or just to the neighbor's son, the difference between a well-maintained vehicle and one that's been poorly cared for can reveal itself after a simple test drive around the block.

Routine Vehicle Care Tips

- Test exterior lights monthly
- Check for adequate tire pressure and tread depth
- Change oil and oil filter on schedule
- Check for battery corrosion
- Replace windshield wipers
- Keep fluids at proper levels
- Wash vehicle regularly and apply wax
- Listen for unusual brake noise and inspect regularly