

NO TUNE-UP FOR 100,000 MILES?

Sounds incredible? But that's what some carmakers are claiming. Has new technology rendered the tune-up unnecessary? The truth is the term tune-up – as we've known it – has become obsolete. The term dates back to the days when engines were cranked by hand and the spark to fire the spark plugs was generated in a fancy looking, varnished wooden box.

The ignition box often needed to be adjusted to the right pitch, hence the "*tune-up*". In those days before electronic engine controls and onboard computers, the basic engine timing, distributor point gap, fast idle and automatic choke often needed to be adjusted, usually at the same time the spark plugs needed replacing. A tune-up meant changing the plugs, ignition wires, points, condenser, cap, rotor and making any necessary adjustments for the engine to run at peak power and efficiency. Modern computer controlled and fuel injected engines don't need those adjustments. The computer does all the adjusting. When it comes to the 100,000 mile tune-up, carmakers mean that under normal driving conditions, they anticipate that the spark plugs on certain engine models will not need to be changed for up to 100,000 miles.

Today's sophisticated engines are held to higher standards of efficiency. To meet ever-stricter emission controls, they need to be checked periodically to ensure they are fuel consumption and exhaust emissions efficient. A lump of carbon or small quantity of oil could foul a spark plug. Left un-repaired until the recommended tune-up interval, increased fuel consumption costs and potential damage to expensive parts, like the oxygen sensor or catalytic converter, far exceed any money saved by assuming nothing need to be done until a tune-up is recommended. Remember, potentially longer-lasting spark plugs don't guarantee an engine will run efficiently without any attention

Generally, aside from spark plugs, the need for servicing remains the same. Filters should be changed at regularly scheduled intervals. The distributor cap and rotor may show some wear and fuel injectors may get dirty.

Recommended maintenance services are part of today's "Tune-up"

- Fuel injector service
- Fuel induction service
- Transmission fluid flush
- Power steering fluid flush
- Brake fluid flush

To help avoid some unnecessary repairs, have your engine analyzed annually.