

Wheels: Joe writes, “If your engine oil turns black soon after an oil change, what would this indicate? For example, my wife drives a 1998 Mitsubishi Galant with 50,000 miles on it. After an oil change, and until the next oil change, the oil maintains a good color and always looks clean. I drive a 1981 Chevy Camaro Z28. And within a day or so after an oil change, the oil is black. Does the engine need to be rebuilt? I also notice oil on the valve cover and around the breather grommet, and every few weeks, I have to add a quart of oil, whereas my wife’s car never goes below full between oil changes. Thanks for any help.”

Halderman: Your older vehicle likely is worn and has many deposits that the fresh oil is cleaning, which is why the oil is turning black after a short time. This is normal, especially for an engine that is over 20 years old. Does the engine need an overhaul? Maybe. If the oil usage is your only concern, an overhaul costing many hundreds of dollars may not be worth it. I suggest that you keep an eye on the oil usage and add a quart as needed. It would take many quarts of oil to equal the cost of an engine overhaul.

