

Wheels: Denver via e-mail writes, “I have a 1995 Toyota Tacoma that is vibrating excessively (it vibrates only when it is stopped, like at a stop sign). It vibrated a little when it was new and the dealer said this is typical for all the 1995 Tacoma’s. It is a 4-cylinder (with A/C), automatic transmission and King Cab. I bought the truck for my daughter to drive to college and when she was through I would get the truck back for my own use. When I stop at a stop sign or red light with the transmission in drive and the brake on, the vibration shakes the steering wheel and the whole truck. The driver and all passengers can “feel” the vibration. (It shakes the steering wheel so much that it makes a noise.)

When the truck was new, we were notified of a recall for them to beef up the suspension. We took it in and they welded a “stiffener” somewhere. We know the problem has increased over time and it wasn’t this bad when it was new.

The truck has been involved in three minor accidents: 1) someone backed into the passenger side door, 2) a retread from a semi blew off in front of my daughter and she ran over it causing damage “only” to the grill and bumper (so they say), and 3) while sitting at a red light she was hit from behind and pushed into the car in front of her causing damage only to the front bumper.

I have tried to do a little investigation myself while stopped as if at a red light or stop sign (we did this in our driveway). 1) If you put the transmission in “park”, the vibration decreases a lot. 2) If you let off the brake while the transmission is in “drive”, the vibration decreases a lot. 3) With the hood up and the transmission in “park”, I have my daughter put the transmission in “drive” and the engine moves to the right and tightens up (as if “grunting”) and starts to vibrate. When you put the transmission back in “park”, the vibration decreases a lot.”

Halderman: The vibration of a four-cylinder engine is difficult for vehicle manufacturers to eliminate. Most of the problems pertaining to a vibration of a four-cylinder engine at idle speed is related to engine and/or transmission mounts. If one or more of the mounts has collapsed or has been moved as a result of a minor accident, the normal vibration of the engine will be transmitted to the passenger compartment.

Wheels: Does this mean that the engine mounts should be replaced? Is there an alternative?

Halderman: If one or more of the engine mounts is collapsed or leaking hydraulic fluid, it should be replaced. If all of the mounts look OK, then what I would do to try to correct the vibration is loosen all engine and transmission mounts and rock the engine several times to be sure it is settled onto the mounts. Don’t worry, the engine will not fall out. This would help if the mounts have been placed in a binding condition. This procedure helps reduce the vibration in many cases. If this procedure does not work, replace the engine and/or transmission mounts based on visual inspection.

