

Wheels: Ron asks via e-mail whether or not he should have the timing belt replaced on his 1994 Toyota Camry at 120,000 miles. He replaced the timing belt at 60,000 miles as recommended by the vehicle manufacturer. Does this mean that he should have the belt replaced every 60,000 miles?

Halderman: Yes. The timing belt should be replaced every 60,000 miles as specified by the vehicle manufacturer. This means that if the interval is 60,000 miles or every 5 years, then the belt should be replaced at 60,000, 120,000, and 180,000 miles or at 5 years, 10 years, and 15 years. The alternative is to hope that the belt does not break. If the timing belt breaks when the engine is running, many engines will suffer catastrophic damage including bending valves, breaking pistons or even cracking the cylinder head(s) and the engine block. The cost to repair the damage will often exceed the value of the vehicle.

Wheels: Are there other items that should be replaced when you have the timing belt replaced?

Halderman: Yes. Most experts recommend that the water pump, crankshaft seal, and camshaft seal(s) be replaced when the timing belt is replaced. Additional cost items may also include accessory drive belt and antifreeze coolant replacement.

