

Wheels: A reader asks whether the timing belt should be replaced on a 1992 Honda Accord that has only 43,000 miles on the odometer. The dealer recommended that the belt be replaced at a cost of about \$500. The owner's manual says to replace the belt at 90,000 miles. The reader wants to maintain the vehicle yet not spend money if at all possible. What is your advice?

Halderman: The dealer is correct – the belt should be replaced. The vehicle manufacturer recommends that the belt be replaced every 90,000 miles *or* every 72 months (6 years) whichever occurs first. Because the Honda is over 6 years old, I would bite the bullet and have the belt replaced. The belt deteriorates due to age as well as use. The engine in this Honda is called an interference engine. This means that if the belt breaks when the engine is running, the pistons can hit the valves. This interference often causes catastrophic engine damage including bending valves, breaking pistons, cracking the cylinder head, or even cracking the engine block. The cost to repair this type of engine damage is very expensive and could exceed the value of the vehicle.

