

Wheels: A reader writes via e-mail that his 1996 Dodge Intrepid has a bad case of body odor. Any advice will be appreciated.

Halderman: Odor usually results from mold or mildew around the evaporator section of the air-conditioning system. As warm moist air passes through the cool evaporator coil, the moisture in the air condenses into water. This water is suppose to drain out through a small drain located in the bottom of the evaporator housing and drip onto the road. If this drain becomes clogged with dirt or debris, mold and mildew can form which causes the odor. The first step to rid the vehicle of its “bad breath” is to open the drain and allow the water to escape the evaporator housing. After the drain has been cleaned, a mild bleach solution (one cup of bleach to a gallon of water) can be poured down the vents located in front of the windshield. Be careful not to spill any of the bleach solution on the paint. Allow the solution to work for several hours and then rinse thoroughly with water. Repeat again if necessary.

Wheels: Is there anything else that may need to be done to correct the problem from reoccurring?

Halderman: Some vehicle manufacturers recommend that the computer be reprogrammed to keep the blower motor on for several minutes after the ignition is turned off to help dry out any moisture around the evaporator. Check with your local dealer to see if this or any other service procedures can be helpful.

