



The Serratore family share the benefits of regular maintenance for their Toyota vehicles

BY HEATHER HUDSON

There are lots of reasons why Gerry Serratore loves to have his daughters visit the family home in Oakville, Ont. One of them is the chuckle he gets from the scene in his driveway.

"We've got four little Toyotas parked in our driveway when everybody's home. Each of my three daughters has a Yaris and my wife has a Prius."

As Serratore gives all the Toyotas a wash and a vacuum, he's reminded of his loyalty to the Toyota brand. "I've been very impressed with Toyota... any issue I've ever had has always been due to usage and, to me, that's the sign of a good car," he said.

Serratore's experience has a lot to do with the quality of Toyota vehicles — but also with his healthy habits when it comes to maintaining his vehicles. "My philosophy is that I purchase my vehicle and keep it a long time if it's good. So it makes sense to maintain it properly."

REGULAR VISITS ARE KEY

David Stevens, a service advisor in a Dartmouth, N.S., Toyota dealership, said Toyota drivers like Serratore, who follow the recommended maintenance schedule for their vehicles, will have a better performing car that costs less to upkeep and will be with them for the long haul.

"When we look at customers who keep up with regular maintenance versus those who don't, we see the difference," said Stevens.

"For example, a bit of wear in the steering system is often picked up and addressed in routine maintenance. If [regular maintenance] is skipped, that small problem can lead to tires wearing out faster and damage to other parts of the vehicle's suspension and steering. Preventative maintenance

extends the life of a vehicle's components."

When it comes to regular maintenance for her Yaris, Serratore's daughter Michelle, an account manager at a marketing agency in North York, Ont., says the sticker in her windshield is a good reminder of when her car is due. But her father's voice echoing in her head doesn't hurt, either.

"He definitely instilled the importance of regular maintenance in us," she said. "If I run over [the recommended maintenance schedule] by a few hundred kilometres I have my dad in the back of my head telling me, 'You've got to take it in.'"

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTENANCE

Toyota Canada provides a Maintenance Menu for all 1990 and subsequent model year vehicles. Typically, regular maintenance is required at intervals of 8,000 kms or six months.

These are no arbitrary recommendations. The Maintenance Menu designed for each Toyota model was developed to match the Canadian climate and environment, and to optimize the life and performance of each vehicle.

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- Michelle Serratore

“The Toyota engineers who build these vehicles understand what services need to be done and when to maintain a good, reliable experience for the driver over the long term,” says Stevens.

Toyota’s owner’s manuals feature information about which components will be checked at each prescribed interval. The Toyota.ca website also has the customized Maintenance Menu for every Toyota model.

Even though she doesn’t consult her owner’s manual or the Toyota website to know what’s going to happen at her next maintenance visit, Michelle said she feels well-informed about the health of her Yaris. When she takes it to be serviced at her local dealership, she said, the service advisor gives her a full and clear status report.

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Stevens said having your Toyota serviced at a dealership is important to ensure its well-being. “Our technicians have a lot of product training from Toyota Canada, so we know our cars best. We have the ability to give Toyota drivers better advice when it comes to long-term maintenance.”



WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET OFF TRACK?

Toyota Canada Service Advisor Johnny Ly sees it all the time. Customers sheepishly visiting the dealership where he works in Richmond, B.C. with a vehicle that is way off its recommended maintenance schedule. Ly acknowledges that life often gets in the way of keeping on top of regular maintenance.

“Can you jump back on schedule? Absolutely. However, if you miss an oil change or a routine check, you could cause internal damage that you wouldn’t know about until later in the life of the vehicle. We always recommend following up on missed service items to ensure your vehicle is running as optimally as possible.”

One of Stevens’ tips for keeping his customers on track with regular maintenance is recommending they make an

appointment for the next service the way they might do when they visit the dentist. “If they find that in six months the exact date doesn’t work for them, at least they’ll know they need to make it a priority to reschedule a date around that time.”

Gerry is diligent about servicing his cars on time and isn’t above taking matters into his own hands to make sure his youngest daughter, who attends university in upstate New York, is taking proper care of her Yaris.

“I e-mail her once in a while to ask her about mileage and whether she’s been in for an oil change.”

For details about your Toyota’s regular maintenance schedule and services, visit Toyota.ca. You’ll find the Maintenance Menu under the “For Owners” section and then the “Service Your Vehicle” subsection.