



## CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 47

# Caring for your chain gives a better ride

One of the best things you can do to improve your ride is to keep the chain on the bicycle clean and well lubricated.

A standard chain contains about 120 links that pivot as they move around the cogs, and the smoother it glides over the cogs, the easier it is to turn the pedals and to shift gears.

### Cleaning

A chain gunked up with oil will attract grit that then works itself inside the moving parts, grinding against surfaces and eventually wearing them out.

Most of the gunk can be removed by simply wiping the chain vigorously with a rag. If it's very greasy, you may need to use some solvent, such as chain degreaser, available from bike shops. Alternatively, you can use petrol or kerosene, or even citrus cleaner from the supermarket.

A toothbrush dipped in solvent can be useful for cleaning out gunk from between the links.

A more expensive option is to use a chain cleaner tool that clamps to the chain and contains brushes and a reservoir of solvent, acting like a tiny car wash.

With the tool clamped to your chain, rotate the chain by turning the pedals with your hand. On some models, you need to release the solvent from the top reservoir. Wipe the chain with a rag afterwards.

If the chain is a real mess, it should be removed using a special chain breaker tool, and then soaked in solvent for a few hours to remove grit from inside the links.

### Lubricating

Re-lubricating the rollers and pins inside the chain links helps the chain to glide easily, but is important to use the correct type of oil.

Avoid motor oil or cooking oil – they attract grit and will contribute to the premature ageing of your chain.

Instead, use chain lubricant from a bike shop that comes in smallish bottles and costs around \$10.



Before applying the lubricant, ensure the chain is clean and that any solvent has been wiped off.

With the bike on a stand or upside-down, slowly rotate the chain and place a drop of lube on each roller. Then rotate the chain a little faster as you change up and down through the gears. Moving the chain sideways like this helps the lubricant to penetrate the inside of each link. Finally, wipe the chain thoroughly to remove excess.

Clean and lubricate the chain whenever it starts to sound noisy, and always after you've ridden in the wet.

***This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. You can find more cycling fact sheets online at [www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling)***

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