



CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 56

Maintenance will save time and money in the long run

A well-maintained bicycle is more reliable, safer and easier to ride than one that has been neglected.

Yet all you need to keep your bike in good working order is a basic tool kit that includes a set of fixed spanners, allen keys, screwdrivers, a tyre lever and some lubricant. With these on hand, regular maintenance can be divided into weekly and monthly tasks.

Once a week, check that both tyres are properly inflated and that the brake or gear cables are not beginning to fray.

Also on weekly basis, apply a small amount of special bicycle lubricant to gears, brake pivots, brake levers and gear levers, but avoid getting it on the rims as this will affect brake effectiveness.

Every month, check the tyres for splitting or worn tread and replace if necessary. Examine the wheels to ensure there are no loose spokes and that the rims are true (straight). If one or both is slightly buckled, you can learn how to straighten them using an excellent website resource at www.parktool.com/repair/

If your bicycle is fitted with traditional rim brakes, carefully check the pads monthly for signs of wear and make sure they are positioned to only make contact with the rim and not the tyre.

When the brake levers are squeezed hard, they should finish about 20 mm from the handlebars. If they are too soft or hard, the cable tension will need to be adjusted.

New bicycles in particular, require constant adjustment because they go through a settling process, which usually sees cable stretching and gear misalignment occurring after the first few rides.

Regardless of age, all bikes need to be regularly tested for looseness in the handlebars, pedal axles and bottom bracket.

Lastly, check for any other rattles by conducting a drop test – lift the entire bike five centimetres off the ground and allow it to drop lightly on its tyres.

In addition to all those tasks, the all-important chain should be thoroughly cleaned and lubricated every six months or so.

It is highly recommended that a full service of the gear mechanism be carried out annually, but this is probably best left to a qualified bicycle mechanic – many bike shops employ full-time technicians who can do such servicing for a small fee.

Informative bike maintenance courses for the public are run periodically by retailers such as The Bicycle Entrepreneur, and also through some local bicycle user groups.

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

