Checking Your Engine

The engine is arguably the most important part of a car. It is expensive to repair, and it is essential for the car to run. Panic strikes when the “Check Engine” light clicks on during a drive, and many people are left wondering why. If anything goes wrong under the hood of the car you can expect that light to go off.  The actual issues you need to deal with range from small fixes to costly repairs.  Some of the most common you may encounter if ever you own, rent, or drive a car is as follows:

1.  Gas cap tightness.  This type of issue is one of the least problematic as it is likely no cost at all.  You can try tightening the gas cap and see what happens.  The light may go out immediately or it might take a week to re-calibrate itself.

2.  If you have the wrong octane fuel or you get some bad fuel, perhaps with condensation in the lines, you get water.  Cars are super sensitive and some simply do not function as well if they don't have the correct octane level.  Make sure the fuel you are using is the correct octane level whenever filling the car.  Use this fuel up, or if you are noticing very bad performance, perhaps drain the fuel and refill it to see if you correct the problem.

3.  Bad oxygen sensor.  Oxygen sensors are not designed to last forever, so it isn't a rare issue for these to go bad.  The good news is they aren't excessively expensive and are about $300 per sensor.  The bad news is some cars have multiple, even up to 4 of these sensors.  So if they all go bad at once the overall expense can add up.

4.  Bad spark plug wires. Since these wires are simply that, wires, coated in plastic or rubber, and they can dry out and crack over time and cause issues getting the electricity needed to the spark plugs.  Inspect the wires of your spark plugs, especially near the ends.  Look to see if you can identify any cracks or holes.  If so, replace them.  This isn't too expensive of a fix and will help ensure your car functions well.

5.  Bad mass airflow sensor.  This sensor monitors the air amount, which is mixed in with the fuel injector system.

The bottom line is that even though it can be scary, you need to address the root of the problem or you could wind up with a totally dead car or at least very costly repairs.  Taking care of the issues yourself, if you can get the cause codes out of the system and understand what they mean, and if you have the skills to do yourself, or take it to a repair shop where they can run some comprehensive tests on the vehicle.  Not checking the light out or fixing the problem could destroy your car.  Or even worse, it could put your life and the lives of your loved ones in jeopardy should your vehicle malfunction in an untimely situation or locale. Be safe, it may not be as bad as you first expect but could save you much stress and expense by addressing earlier rather than later.

Written by the staff of Custom Complete Automotive. Custom Complete is your go to solution for the best car repair, inspections and an [oil change Columbia MO](http://www.customcompleteautomotive.com/)has to offer.