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Imagine falling in love with your vehicle all over again. You know, having the same sense of pride you felt when you first drove off the dealer's lot.

Possible? With a little elbow grease applied to the exterior and interior, plus a mechanical inspection by a trusted automotive technician, almost anything is possible.

Take that "new car" ride, for example. It may have been thousands of miles since your vehicle has delivered precise steering response and a comfortable, factory-fresh ride, but replacing a few worn undercar parts could make a world of difference in your driving experience.

Replacing worn shock absorbers and/or McPherson struts is one simple way to improve ride and handling. Ride control replacement can have important safety benefits as well, since shocks and struts play key roles in a vehicle's steering, stopping and stability performance.

"Steering, stopping and stability are dependent on properly functioning brake, steering and suspension parts," said Mark Christiaanse, director of product management for Tenneco Inc.'s Monroe brand of shocks and struts. "A worn shock absorber or strut might not only make your ride less comfortable, but it also could lead to increased stopping distance, reduced steering precision and degraded stability in some situations."

Monroe recommends replacing worn shocks and struts at 50,000 miles. For many popular-selling vehicles, replacing worn ride control parts that have been driven for 50,000 miles or more can improve the vehicle's handling characteristics and comfort, according to Christiaanse. (Actual mileage may vary depending upon driver ability, vehicle type, and type of driving and road conditions.)

"A new set of shocks or struts can make a huge difference in overall ride quality," he said. "Replacing these and other worn parts helps bring the vehicle closer to its original performance, which is a great way to enhance your driving experience."

Will They Have

The Right Parts?

In most cases, it's not necessary to rely on a vehicle dealership for replacement shocks, struts and other undercar components. A leading ride control brand such as Monroe probably offers exact-fit, model-specific shocks and struts for nearly every popular import and domestic vehicle. In fact, Monroe shocks and struts are engineered to meet or exceed the original units' ride and handling performance, regardless of make or model.

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