

What Does the Check Engine Light Really Mean?

When a car's check engine light comes on, it is a mystery to most drivers. It instills panic in many for good reason. There are times when that light can mean drastic problems in a car's engine system or other operating parts. There are also times when it simply means you changed your brand of gasoline and the car needs to adjust to the new mix. For that reason there is a tendency to ignore that little light and hope the problem will go away.

Should You Worry About Your Check Engine Light?

How do you know if the *check engine light* is trying to tell you there is a serious problem or if it is nothing to worry about? One way is to take the time out of your busy schedule, drive to the mechanic and pay a hefty fee to have them hook up their machine to your car's OBDII system and then tell you to tighten your gas cap as a result. Or you can get your own OBD diagnostic tool that will give you all the information you need right at your fingertips.

Onboard Diagnostic System

These simple devices attach to your automobile's OBDII (onboard diagnostic system) right under the dash just like the big machine at the mechanic shop does and it will give you the exact same readouts plus provide easy to understand graphs and explanations of those confusing codes your mechanic gives you to keep you in the dark as to what is really going on.

Simply take the OBD diagnostic system for a short ride with you when your check engine light comes on and then take it in the house to your personal computer and download the data. The website provided to you with your OBD diagnostic system will decipher the information and give you all the information you need to determine if the problem is serious or not at fractions of the cost of a mechanic's garage. The readout will also give you simple solutions to the easier fixes if they are available plus if you do need to take the car to your mechanic, you can go in well-armed with the knowledge you need to keep from being overcharged for their services.

The OBD system will also alert you to potentially damaging driving habits you may have acquired over time even when your check engine light is not blinking. Things like hard braking and excessive acceleration so that you can correct problems before they affect your car's mechanisms.

Benefits of OBD

There are even more benefits to your own OBD diagnostic system. Never get stuck with a lemon again by taking it on all of your test drives. With your own diagnostic system, you will be able to find out for yourself if your potential new or used car is in good operating order before you drive off the lot. You can even find out why the [check engine light](#) is on. You can also take all the worry out of vacations when you hook it up before a road trip.

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