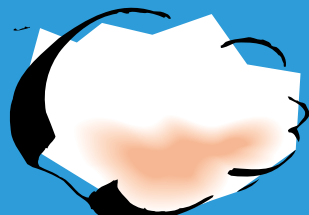





IF YOU THINK IDLING  
IS HARMLESS...

**Think  
Again.**




Every time you start your vehicle, it produces pollutants that contribute to climate change, smog and acid rain. So when your engine runs for no reason — after all, idling gets you nowhere — it needlessly harms the environment.



If you're going to be stopped for more than **10 seconds**, except in traffic — don't idle — **turn off the engine.**



**Q&A**  
on reverse

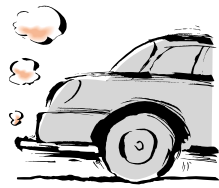


For more information, contact:  
York Region Health Services Health Connection  
at 1-800-361-5653 (toll-free) or 905-895-8004

Canada

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# Idling Q&A



## 1. With modern emissions technology and more fuel-efficient cars, why do I have to worry about a small matter like idling?

Compared with unregulated vehicles 30 years ago, today's new cars generate 98 % fewer hydrocarbons, 96 % less carbon monoxide and 90 % fewer nitrous oxides. Unfortunately one element in tailpipe emissions can't be "cleaned up" – carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). This is the principal greenhouse gas linked to climate change. Every litre of fuel that is burned produces about 2.4 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. The bottom line: the more fuel you use, the more CO<sub>2</sub> you produce. One of the best ways to cut fuel consumption is to avoid idling. After all, it gets you nowhere.

## 2. How can only one litre of gasoline burned by a car or light truck produce 2.4 kg of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)?

Gasoline is rich in carbon, which is converted to CO<sub>2</sub> when burned in the presence of oxygen. If you're a typical motorist who drives 20 000 km each year, you're emitting more than four tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year – that's three times the weight of your car!

## 3. Is it important to idle my vehicle for a few minutes to warm up the engine, especially in winter?

No. Tests show that you need no more than 30 seconds of idling to circulate the engine oil before you can drive away on cold days. Anything more just wastes money and produces needless greenhouse gas emissions. The best way to warm the engine and all other components is to drive your vehicle.

## 4. Is it more economical and fuel-efficient to leave my car running for a few minutes than to constantly turn it off and on?

No. If you're going to be stopped for more than 10 seconds (except in traffic), you'll save fuel and money by turning off the vehicle and then restarting it when you're ready to drive again. Every 10 minutes of idling costs you at least one-tenth of a litre in wasted fuel – and up to four-tenths of a litre if your vehicle has an eight-cylinder engine. There's no question about it – idling gets you nowhere. Instead, it wastes fuel and money and damages the environment.

## 5. Can idling damage my car's engine?

You bet it can! Because the engine isn't working at its peak operating temperature when it's idling, the fuel doesn't undergo complete combustion. This leaves fuel residues that can contaminate engine oil and damage engine parts. For example, fuel residues tend to deposit on spark plugs. As the amount of engine idling increases, the plugs' average temperature drops, and they get dirty more quickly. This, in turn, can increase fuel consumption by four to five percent. It's a vicious circle of wasted fuel and needless greenhouse gas emissions. Excessive idling can also let water condense in the vehicle's exhaust. This can lead to corrosion and reduce the life of the exhaust system.

## 6. How much fuel am I wasting, and how much CO<sub>2</sub> do I produce by idling my vehicle?

One vehicle idling for five minutes burns just over one-tenth of a litre, or about eight cents' worth of gasoline (assuming fuel costs 70 cents a litre). And it produces 271.4 grams of CO<sub>2</sub>. It doesn't sound like a lot, but remember, millions of motorists have fallen into the idling trap. If all drivers of light-duty vehicles in Canada avoided idling them for just five minutes, we would save 1.9 million litres of fuel worth more than \$1.3 million. Just as important, we would prevent more than 1.4 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from entering the atmosphere. Individual actions, when taken by millions of Canadians, can make a difference.

## 7. What are the most common reasons for idling?

Warming up a vehicle is the most common reason drivers give for idling – in both winter and summer! We also idle when we wait at railway crossings, wait to park, run quick errands, stop to talk to an acquaintance or friend, prepare to leave the house, wait to get gas – even wait in line to get our car washed. A lot of vehicle idling time is spent in the drive-through lanes of fast-food restaurants and while waiting for someone. All of these situations waste energy and produce needless greenhouse gas emissions – and they are all avoidable.

## 8. What steps can I take to minimize idling?

It's easy – think about fuel efficiency every time you use a car. Try these **simple steps**:

- ▶ **Minimize warm-up idling.** This is especially important in winter, because emissions can double in a cold engine. Drive away after no more than 30 seconds of idling, providing the vehicle's windows are clear.
- ▶ **Use a block heater to warm the engine before you start it.** This reduces engine wear, improves fuel efficiency and reduces emissions by up to 20 % in cold conditions. Use an automatic timer to turn on the block heater two hours before you plan to start the vehicle.
- ▶ **If you're going to be stopped for more than 10 seconds, turn off the engine.** Never leave the vehicle running while you zip into a corner store or fast-food restaurant – it's hard on your pocketbook, bad for the environment and an invitation to car thieves.
- ▶ **Avoid using remote car starters.** They encourage you to start your car before you're ready to drive it, which just means needless idling.