



Coolant Maintenance

Like any other engine fluid, the coolant needs to be checked on a regular basis. You're checking for two things: quantity and condition.

Most vehicles have a coolant recovery tank or overflow reservoir, which makes checking the fluid level a lot easier and safer. The configuration of the radiator and tank/reservoir lets hot coolant expand into the tank as the engine temperature rises. When the engine cools down, a slight vacuum forms in the radiator and the fluid is drawn out of the tank/reservoir and back into the radiator. As long as the radiator cap remains sealed, the coolant can expand and contract without losing a drop.

How to check coolant level

You can check your coolant level simply by looking at the overflow tank. There are two level indicators on the side of the tank: one indicates the level when the engine is hot; the other, when it is cold.

If your coolant level is slightly low, it's safe to add a few ounces of plain water to bring the level back to the appropriate mark. If you have to add more than a quart of liquid to the cooling system, use a glycol/water antifreeze mixture.

Some vehicles' recovery tanks are pressurized when the engine is hot, making the caps as dangerous to remove as radiator caps. Pressurized recovery tanks are clearly marked with warning decals and their cap is a system pressure cap, rather than a simple plug or twist-off cap.



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