

KEEPING IT UP: Ah no, a Flat Tyre!

What to do with a flat tyre on a motorcycle: Get off the road!

If you're on a motorcycle and you suspect you've got a flat tyre, time is of the essence: your first priority is to ensure you can safely pull over and get out of the flow of traffic.

Applying brakes can cause a loss of control, so carefully manoeuvre your bike with a firm grip on the handlebars, without fighting the bike too much. Avoid downshifting or braking until you're at a slower speed, and if you're certain you know which tyre is affected, apply brakes to the other wheel slightly and gradually. Some motorcycles have linked brakes, so keep that in mind when and if you apply the stoppers when you've got a flat tyre, since that can unintentionally add brake pressure to both wheels.

Flat tyres can be caused by a number of factors, including wet weather (which lubricates sharp objects, making them easier to penetrate rubber), and high performance tyres (which are stickier than most, and tend to pick up more foreign objects.) Keep in mind that many flats are caused by riding with low tyre pressure; our Tyre Safety Article offers tips on how to ensure your tyres stay in top shape.

One way to deal with a flat motorcycle tyre-- especially if you're stranded-- is to fix it yourself. Tyre repair kits are relatively simple to use, and they pack easily under your seat. While some damaged tyres are beyond repair, it's worth trying to plug your tyre when your options are running low and you're nowhere near home or a service station. Be aware if a puncture is too close to the sidewall, a plug isn't always the safest solution for repairing a flat.

Compressed air won't necessarily solve a flat tyre problem, but it can certainly save the day if you have a slow leak, or need to fill up a tyre after you've repaired a flat. Carry a small bottle or two of compressed air, and you won't need to rely on service stations to top off the tyre in order to maintain proper pressure.



Tyre seal is a viscous material that gets sprayed inside a flat tyre and acts as a sealant. This solution is controversial; some swear by it, and others are quick to point out its hazards. However, it is worth considering the fact that if you're stranded far away from help, it's probably in your best interests to view this as a short term solution that will help get you to safety, at the very least.

While there's sometimes no way to avoid a flat, there are certainly ways to prepare yourself in case you do find yourself in a compromised position. For starters, make sure you regularly check your tyre pressure tread levels, since riding on low pressure can lead to premature tyre wear and eventually a flat.

You'll also want to prepare for the unexpected by packing a tyre repair kit in your touring emergency pack, and include cans of compressed air and/or tyre seal, if room permits.

Most importantly, once you've plugged your tyre, keep your speed and cornering down; get your tyre checked out by a professional or better still, replace it as soon as possible. That plug will haunt you around every corner: "Will it hold, or not?"