



Diagnosis Brief
what this complaint usually turns out to be

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Data as of July 2026

fixdozer.com/symptoms/check-engine-light/

Check Engine Light On — What It Usually Means, and What It Costs

How real visits for a check engine light ended at independent shops across the US — the part actually replaced, how often, and what it cost when it was the only fix.

Spark plugs or sensor

About a third of all these visits end in one of these two

Spark plugs **\$170 – \$474**

Sensor **\$180 – \$433**

typical cost when it was the only fix
(parts + labor)

THE FIX INVOLVED	SHARE OF THESE VISITS*	TYPICAL COST†	MEDIAN
Spark plugs	17.6%	\$170 – \$474	\$296
Sensor	14.2%	\$180 – \$433	\$287
Oxygen sensor	11.5%	\$212 – \$435	\$304
Ignition coil	10.9%	\$184 – \$402	\$269
EVAP component	10.0%	\$199 – \$461	\$302
Thermostat	6.2%	\$165 – \$408	\$262
Exhaust component	4.2%	\$117 – \$476	\$232
Fuel filter	4.2%	\$134 – \$436	\$256
Valve cover gasket	3.7%	\$182 – \$481	\$299
Other, rarer causes	smaller shares — gas caps, thermostats, coils, catalytic converters, wiring	varies	—

*Share of visits whose repair involved this part; combined repairs count toward each part, so shares overlap and don't add to 100%.

†Middle half of real invoices when this was the only fix — parts + labor, all vehicle types.

WHICH ONE IS YOURS? LISTEN FIRST

- **Steady light** — A steady light with the car driving normally is rarely an emergency — emissions-related causes like oxygen sensors and EVAP valves dominate.
- **Flashing light** — A flashing check engine light means active misfire — raw fuel reaching the catalytic converter.
- **Light after refueling** — A light that appears right after a fill-up is the EVAP system's signature — often a loose or worn gas cap, next most often a purge valve.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE SHOP

The light is a code, not a diagnosis — insist the shop reads the code and tests the circuit before selling a part. A single sensor code is usually a modest repair; a flashing light is a stop-driving-soon misfire. If the quote jumps straight to a catalytic converter, ask what killed it — a converter dies from an upstream cause, and replacing it alone brings the light back.

ABOUT THIS DATA · HOW TO USE THIS BRIEF

Vehicles **all makes and models, US fleet**

Data confidence **High** — *large sample, stable shares*

Records through **July 2026**, refreshed continuously

Source **paid invoices from independent US repair shops**

Take it to the shop. It tells you what the likely answers are and what each one should cost — so when the diagnosis comes back, you already know whether the number fits. Vehicle-specific price reports for the common fixes are on fixdozer.com.

NOT A DIAGNOSIS This brief describes how other owners' visits for a check engine light ended. Your vehicle, its history and the shop's testing decide yours. FixDozer does not perform repairs and receives nothing from shops.

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