



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO A HAPPY & HEALTHY BIKE CHAIN: CLEANING & MAINTENANCE MADE EASY

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BY EMILIO SIMON

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Introduction

Your bike chain is the unsung hero of your cycling adventures. It's responsible for transferring the power from your pedals to the rear wheel, propelling you forward with every stroke. But like any hardworking component, it needs regular care and attention to perform at its best.

Neglecting your chain can lead to a host of issues: noisy shifting, skipping gears, decreased efficiency, and even premature wear on other drive-train parts. But fear not! Maintaining your bike chain is easier than you might think. With a little know-how and some basic tools, you can keep your chain happy, healthy, and spinning smoothly for miles to come.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the simple steps of cleaning and lubricating your bike chain, ensuring optimal performance and longevity. We'll also share some insider tips and tricks to make the process a breeze.

So let's get started and unlock the full potential of your bike!

Understanding Your Bike Chain

Before we dive into maintenance, let's get familiar with the basic anatomy of your bike chain. It's made up of several key components:

- **Rollers:** These cylindrical parts rotate as the chain moves, engaging with the teeth of your cassette and chain-rings.
- **Inner Plates:** These flat plates connect the rollers on the inside of the chain.
- **Outer Plates:** Similar to the inner plates, these connect the rollers on the outside of the chain.
- **Pins:** These small metal rods hold the inner and outer plates together, allowing the chain to articulate.

The chain's primary function is to transmit power from the pedals to the rear wheel. When you pedal, the chain engages with the chain-rings attached to the crank-set. This rotation is then transferred to the cassette at the rear wheel, causing it to spin and propel your bike forward.

There are various types of bike chains, typically categorized by the number of gears they are designed for (e.g., 9-speed, 10-speed, 11-speed). It's important to use a chain that is compatible with your bike's drive-train for optimal performance and shifting.

Why Chain Cleaning Matters

Over time, your bike chain accumulates dirt, grime, and old lubricant. This buildup creates friction, reducing the efficiency of your drive-train and making your pedaling feel sluggish. Additionally, a dirty chain can accelerate wear on other components like your cassette and chain-rings, leading to costly repairs down the road.

Regular cleaning removes these contaminants, allowing your chain to move freely and efficiently. It also helps prevent rust and corrosion, ensuring a longer lifespan for your chain and other drive-train components.

The Chain Cleaning Process

Cleaning your bike chain is a simple process that requires just a few basic tools and supplies:

- Degreaser: A cleaning solution specifically designed to break down grease and grime.
- Old rags or paper towels: For wiping down the chain and removing excess degreaser.
- Gloves: Optional but recommended to protect your hands from the degreaser.
- Chain cleaning tool: Optional but highly recommended for a more thorough cleaning.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Prepare your bike: Lean your bike against a wall or flip it upside down to access the chain easily.
2. Apply degreaser:
 - If using a chain cleaning tool, fill it with degreaser according to the instructions and attach it to the chain. Rotate the pedals backward to run the chain through the tool several times.
 - If not using a tool, drip degreaser onto the chain while slowly rotating the pedals backward. Make sure to cover the entire chain.

1. Scrub the chain: Use a brush or rag to scrub the chain, paying close attention to the rollers and links. You can also use an old toothbrush to reach tight spots.
2. Backpedal and repeat: Shift into a different gear and backpedal the chain to expose clean sections. Repeat the degreasing and scrubbing process until the entire chain is clean.
3. Rinse and dry: Rinse the chain thoroughly with water to remove any degreaser residue. Then, dry the chain completely with a clean rag or paper towel.



The Art of Lubrication

After cleaning, it's crucial to lubricate your chain to reduce friction, protect it from corrosion, and ensure smooth operation. There are two main types of lubricants:

- Dry lube: Best for dry and dusty conditions, as it doesn't attract dirt easily.
- Wet lube: Ideal for wet or rainy conditions, as it's more resistant to water and stays in place longer.

My Recommendation: Rock N' Roll Lubricants

I've found that Rock N' Roll lubricants are a fantastic choice for both dry and wet conditions. They offer excellent lubrication and protection while also helping to keep your chain clean.

- Rock N' Roll Gold: This dry lube is perfect for everyday riding in dry conditions. It's easy to apply, doesn't attract dirt, and keeps your chain running smoothly.
- Rock N' Roll Extreme: This wet lube is ideal for riding in wet or muddy conditions. It's incredibly durable and water-resistant, ensuring your chain stays lubricated even in the harshest weather.

How to Apply Lubricant:

1. Choose the right lube: Select the appropriate Rock N' Roll lube based on your riding conditions.
2. Apply lube: Unlike some other lubes where you add drops to each chain link, with Rock N Roll you'll want to thoroughly wet the entire chain while rotating the pedals backward.
3. Wipe off excess: Use a clean rag to wipe off any excess lubricant from the chain.

Additional Tips & Tricks

- Cleaning frequency: Clean your chain every 200-300 miles or more frequently if you ride in wet or muddy conditions.
- Chain wear: Check your chain for wear regularly using a chain wear tool. Replace it if it's stretched beyond the recommended limit.
- Other drivetrain components: Clean and lubricate your cassette and derailleur pulleys periodically for optimal performance.

Recommended Products

- Chain Lube: Rock N' Roll Gold (dry conditions) or Rock N' Roll Extreme (wet conditions)
- Degreaser: WD-40 Bike Degreaser



Conclusion

By following this guide and incorporating regular chain maintenance into your routine, you'll ensure your bike performs at its best, enjoy smoother rides, and extend the lifespan of your drive train components. Remember, a happy chain means a happy cyclist! Now go out there and enjoy the ride!