

HONDA · POWERTRAIN

P1203

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P1203 · Honda

Cylinder 3 Misfire

P1203 is a Honda-specific trouble code indicating that the powertrain control module (PCM) has detected a misfire on cylinder number 3, typically by monitoring crankshaft speed fluctuations. The PCM sets this code when the misfire count exceeds a threshold that could damage the catalytic converter or affect emissions.

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Honda specific	Medium	Intermediate	Fuel and air metering (injector circuits)

Symptoms you may notice

- Check Engine Light (CEL) illuminated, often flashing if the misfire is severe
- Noticeable engine vibration or shaking, especially at idle or during acceleration
- Reduced engine power and poor acceleration
- Rough idle or stalling
- Often no symptoms besides the warning light, especially if the misfire is intermittent
- Poor fuel economy

Common causes, most likely first

- Faulty ignition coil or spark plug in cylinder 3
- Worn or fouled spark plug
- Clogged or failing fuel injector for cylinder 3
- Vacuum leak affecting cylinder 3 intake runner
- Low compression due to worn piston rings, valves, or head gasket
- Faulty PCM or wiring issue in the ignition coil circuit

How to diagnose and fix it

- Scan all codes and check freeze frame data to confirm the misfire conditions
- Inspect spark plug and ignition coil for cylinder 3; swap with a known-good cylinder to see if the misfire moves
- Perform a compression test and leak-down test to rule out mechanical issues
- Check fuel injector operation and perform a balance test or swap injectors
- Inspect intake manifold for vacuum leaks and check PCV system
- Verify ignition coil circuit wiring and connectors for damage or corrosion
- If all else fails, perform a crankshaft position variation relearn or check PCM software updates



Honda Cylinder 3 Misfire: Beyond the Usual Suspects

- Honda engines are known for EGR port clogs that can cause misfires, particularly on V6 models; a clogged EGR passage can disproportionately affect cylinder 3.
- A misfire code does not always mean the ignition coil is at fault; valve clearance issues on Honda engines can cause misfires that only appear when the engine is cold.
- The PCM may set P1203 even if the misfire is intermittent and not felt by the driver; always check for stored history codes and freeze frame data.
- Fuel quality plays a role; low-octane or contaminated fuel can cause misfires that set this code, so verify fuel pressure and quality before replacing parts.
- Honda's misfire detection can be sensitive to crankshaft position sensor signal interference; check for aftermarket accessories or poor grounds that may introduce noise.

Can I keep driving with P1203?

If the check engine light is flashing, stop driving immediately to prevent catalytic converter damage. If the light is steady and the engine runs smoothly, you can drive cautiously to a repair shop, but avoid heavy acceleration and towing.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scanner with live data and misfire counters
- Spark plug socket and wrench
- Compression tester
- Fuel pressure gauge
- Multimeter
- Vacuum gauge

Reading P1203

P	Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
1	Manufacturer-specific code (Honda): its meaning depends on the make.
2	Fuel and air metering (injector circuits).
03	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P0300 Random/Multiple Cylinder Misfire Detected · **P0301** Cylinder 1 Misfire Detected · **P0302** Cylinder 2 Misfire Detected · **P0303** Cylinder 3 Misfire Detected · **P0304** Cylinder 4 Misfire Detected



See it working

Watch the animated explainer **Four-Stroke Engine Cutaway: Intake to Exhaust** on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/honda-p1203/>

