

virus protection

how to keep your pc safe

Computer viruses pose a real threat to the health of your PC, especially if you use the Internet regularly. Knowing what a virus is and how your computer could possibly contract one will help you take the necessary measures to protect your computer.

what is a computer virus?

A computer virus is a man-made computer code that disrupts a computer's functionality by infecting its system and destroying data. It can be transmitted to your computer via an infected floppy disk or over a network, such as the Internet, when you receive e-mail or download a software program (known as "shareware") from a web site.

About 16,000 viruses have been identified by experts and approximately 1000 of these are actively "in the wild." However, according to research, about two-thirds of all infections are caused by the same 10 viruses.

how does a virus affect the way my computer functions?

A virus disables your PC by reproducing itself either in your computer's memory (RAM) or on the hard drive. A virus can remain on a computer's hard drive even after it has been reformatted. Sometimes, a virus remains hidden and expands invisibly or quietly deposits itself in a document. This is called a stealth virus.

Your computer may have contracted a virus if one or more of the following symptoms appear:

- Upon booting the system, the screen displays an unexpected graphic such as a famous person or a holiday symbol you did not create.
- You receive unusual or inexplicable error messages.
- The computer makes strange beeping or clicking noise or plays music that is inconsistent with the function you are performing.
- The system time and date is altered.
- Files are randomly corrupted.

- You receive "write protect errors" when executing .exe files from a write-protected disk.
- You cannot open certain files.
- Your computer's speed is affected by extended boot times, a slow-running system, increased disk access times, or the system freezes frequently.

If your computer is experiencing any of these problems, try rebooting it. If it is still experiencing the problem, contact your computer retailer.

what can I do to prevent my computer from contracting a virus?

Using an anti-virus program is the best way to keep your computer healthy and virus-free. Anytime you try downloading software, either from a CD-ROM or the Internet, the program will automatically scan the software to see if any viruses exist. The two best anti-virus programs are Norton AntiVirus and McAfee VirusScan.

When buying software, do a bit of homework first and use a reputable software dealer. Be careful how you use and trade CD-ROMs and floppy disks with friends and family. Also, be careful when downloading inexpensive "shareware" from the Internet. If you have any questions regarding purchasing software, contact your local retailer.

what can I do to protect my computer?

If your system should become infected, there are several troubleshooting and diagnostic utilities available to remedy the problem. Norton *Systemworks* (which has Norton *AntiVirus* within it).

can a virus affect any other equipment attached to a computer?

Even though a virus usually affects only software, it can cause problems with different hardware devices attached to a computer. A virus can cause printing problems, interfere with the keyboard by displaying multiple characters when only one key has been pressed, or cause random and unexpected accessing of other drives.