

Computer Viruses

During the last few months, here at WebDispatch.com we have seen an increase in the number of computers with viruses. When we talk about computer viruses we are referring to malicious software which includes malware, spyware, adware, trojan horses and computer worms. Computer viruses can be very harmful to your computer system. They can corrupt files and delete data. A virus can also open the door to unauthorized downloads, software installations and more viruses.

Today's viruses are getting more sophisticated and aggressive each day. They are getting trickier in the ways they manage to get into your computer. Even if you have anti-virus protection, they can sneak past and disable it. One common virus that we see regularly portrays itself as Virus Protection. Others appear in email attachments of images, greeting cards, or audio and video files. They can also be embedded in files downloaded from the Internet.

If you have one or more of these symptoms, you could possibly have a computer virus:

- Redirection. When you are browsing the Internet, you will be automatically redirected to a page you didn't intend to visit.
- Your browser freezes.
- Pop ups constantly, sometimes even when you are not browsing the Internet.
- Computer locks up or becomes unresponsive.
- Computer runs slower than usual. Computer viruses eat up a lot of system resources.
- Computer crashes and reboots frequently.
- Unusual error messages, usually in pop up windows.
- Fake virus scans. They make it appear like they are scanning your computer and find tons of viruses. If you click on any button, even to close the pop up, it will download the virus to your computer.
- Can't access your files or disks.
- Your anti-virus software has been disabled. Some viruses try to stop your anti-virus software from working, which then opens you up to even more viruses.

How to protect yourself against computer viruses:

- Install anti-virus and anti-spyware protection and keep it up-to-date. We recommend activating the automatic update feature and performing a scan for viruses, malware & spyware at least once a week.
- Keep a backup of your important files.

- Be careful about opening email attachments. Do not open attachments you are not expecting.
- Do not download anything from any website that you do not know & trust.
- When presented with a choice to download something you have not specifically asked for, do not click anywhere on the screen even to say "NO" to the request or to "X" out of it. Instead close the browser screen from the taskbar at the bottom of the screen by right clicking on it and taking the "close" option.
- Keep current with your operating system updates. Pay special attention to ones related to security.

If you suspect that you have a virus, disconnect your computer from the Internet and/or network immediately. Have a professional take a look at your computer. Do not delay. The longer you wait, the more damage it could cause and the harder it is to eradicate.