



Malware, Spyware, Adware, Viruses

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The average computer user should be aware of potential threats to their computer every time they connect to the Internet.

There are new security threats everyday.

If you do not have good antivirus software installed on your computer you are at a high risk of infecting your computer.

If you have an antivirus but do not download the updates you are at high risk of infecting your computer.



What is Malware?

Malware short for "Malicious" software is designed to infiltrate or damage a computer system without the owner's informed consent.

Malware fundamentally disregards a user's choice regarding how his or her computer will be used.

Malicious software can be divided into different categories which includes viruses, worms, Trojans, and spyware.

Malware has the ability to hijack your web browser, redirect your search engine, bombard your screen with pop-ups and monitor your activity.



What is Spyware?

Spyware is tracking software that hides itself (runs in the background) and gathers information without the computer owner's or user's knowledge or permission for the benefit of someone else.

Spyware can compromise the safety of your passwords, logon information, financial, or personal information.

Other spyware will record your actions and browsing habits on the internet. Any information collected by spyware is usually with the intent to sell.

What spyware and malware have in common is the ability to collect and distribute your personal information without your permission.



What is Adware?

Adware is another form of malware and is exactly as the name suggests, software with advertising.

Adware can be downloaded and sometimes included in free programs. For example Windows Live messenger and Yahoo messenger contain adware.

Although some programs give the option not to install the extra adware, others seem to sneak it in without permission.



What is a Virus?

A small program designed to infect your computer and cause errors, computer crashes, and even destroy your computer hardware.

Unlike spyware, a virus can grow and replicate itself. It can also travel from one computer to another via an internet connection. Of course you can get viruses from discs with virus infested files stored on them, however the internet is the most common entry point.

Some common symptoms of a virus are emails being sent to all contacts when you didn't send them, being taken to webpage's that you didn't choose, or being told you have a virus and to download a program to fix it.



Summary

Malicious code...

Can invade your PC and will take up hard drive space and slow down your PC!

Will allow unauthorized sites to add themselves to your desktop programs.

May allow unwanted toolbars and search bars to attach themselves to your browser without your knowledge or approval.

Your browsing activity can be tracked and monitored thus stealing your identity, one piece at a time. Your personal information can be sold to other parties without your knowledge or consent.

Your default homepage and settings can be hijacked so you can't change them.



Three things you need to protect your computer:

Firewall

A firewall is software or hardware that checks information coming from the Internet or a network, and then either blocks it or allows it to pass through to your computer, depending on your firewall settings.

Antivirus

Microsoft Security Essentials (MSE) www.microsoft.com

Windows Automatic Updates

Make sure that updates are automatically installed on your computer.



Security Checklist

Check for latest Service Packs/Updates for Windows, Office, Internet Explorer.

Keep antivirus definitions updated.

Don't click on suspicious pop-up windows.

Don't download or execute applications from untrusted sources.

Delete your temporary Internet files, clean Internet history, and delete Cookies. www.ccleaner.com

Never open email or an email attachment from an unknown source.

Run Malwarebytes at least once a month.

<http://malwarebytes.org>