



PREVENTING COMPUTER VIRUSES

The only 100% effective way of avoiding a computer virus is not to use a computer. Of course, we're not recommending you get that drastic. Let's first take a look at how viruses are typically spread. There are basically 4 points of entry:

- 1. Your Windows Updates are not current.** – Probably 90% or more of the viruses written are written to exploit the Windows Operating system. Since it is the most commonly used OS, people writing the viruses would rather “fish in a big pond”. Also, while Apple is gaining market share in personal and business placements, most business applications are running on Windows.

Windows updates (and Microsoft Updates including updates for Office, etc...) address known weaknesses in the operating system that can be an opening to exploit. Make sure you're updates are scheduled to run automatically and check periodically that you're up to date.

- 2. Your anti-virus software/virus definitions are not up to date** – Hopefully you understand the importance of anti-virus software, so we don't need to cover this here. However, your anti-virus software is only as good as its last update. Virus definitions (catalogs) are kept by your anti-virus vendor and identify the latest threats so that your software knows how to detect and avoid attack. We recommend that you periodically check to make sure that you're current and receiving up to date information.
- 3. You did it to yourself** – Okay, we're not saying you meant to, but sometimes the action you take can be harmful. You don't have to be doing anything covert or shady to accidentally go somewhere unsafe anymore. We could probably include a complete article on this but we will try to simplify it here.
 - A. You need a firewall** – whether it is a hardware firewall, the windows firewall, the one that comes with your anti-virus or another software solution this should be your first area of defense.

~Continued on Page 2

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EXPIRES 11/1/2011

Preventing Computer Viruses (Continued from Page 1)

- B. Browser Protection** – Although it isn't the only gateway into your computer for a virus, most still come in through surfing the internet. You can install free site advisors like the one from McAfee that provide feedback on the status of each site before entering. There are also options such as web filtering that can go even more granular and allow blocking based on content and specifics you choose.
- C. Anti-virus** – again, you need to keep up to date anti-virus definitions, so you may want to schedule times to check your version and run some on demand scans.
- D. "Let's be careful out there"** – think twice before going somewhere on the internet that may be questionable, downloading things you're unsure of, turning off your anti-virus/firewall, installing free screensavers, weath-erbugs, toolbars, etc... if it's free it's probably not worth it.
- E. Backup** – OK, even though you have done all of the above. You may still get a virus (read further for the last method). The best way to avoid a virus is to be able to roll the clock back to the good ole' days (yes in com-puter time that's usually just a few minutes ago). You need frequent backups and frequent fire-drills to make sure they work.

4. Finally, the 4th way. **You're in the 1% club** – Someone has to get the virus before they establish the anti-virus. There is a chance that you belong to this not-so-elite club. If so, see #3, e.

If you would like additional information or have questions on how to implement these and other best practice proce-dures in your business, please contact us to schedule a free consultation.

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THANK YOU!

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