



## HAYDEN SEALES CONSULTING Computer & Network Specialists

### Computer Viruses: An Epidemic

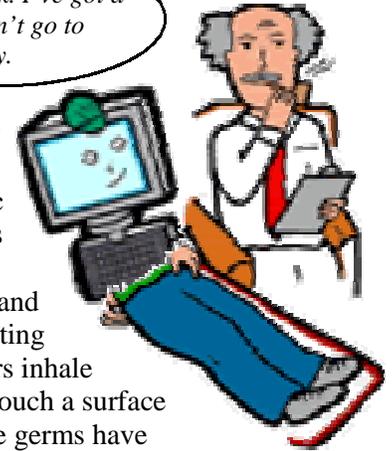
Computer viruses are a lot like the viruses that make people sick, and if we think in those terms, we'll definitely want to do everything we can to fight the bad guys. When your computer's not working because it's been infected with a virus, it's the same as if you have the flu and can't get out of bed for a week --- lost income, backed-up workload, and additional expenses (whether it's a trip to the doctor or a visit from your computer guy).

If you've ever gotten a bad cold or the flu, you can probably identify who gave it to you - your secretary, co-worker, your kids, etc. Similarly, computer viruses almost always come from someone you know. Most viruses arrive as an email with an attachment (commonly, these files have an extension of ".exe" or ".zip" or ".vbs" or ".scr"). The subject line is usually something very generic, such as "Hi" and the message says something seemingly harmless like "Thought you'd enjoy this". Some viruses can be disguised as image (jpg) files; these have ".jpg" before the real extension (i.e., "file.jpg.vbs").

If you open the attachment, *guess what? You're infected!* Depending on what the virus was designed to do, it could, in the worst case scenario, erase your computer's hard drive or make your files inaccessible. Data recovery can get quite expensive which is why backing-up data is critical (*see related article on back page*).

No one intentionally gets another person sick, but it happens. Let's say a co-worker has the flu and he sneezes without covering his mouth.

*I'm so sick. I've got a virus. I can't go to work today.*



The microscopic flu germs become airborne and unsuspecting coworkers inhale them or touch a surface where the germs have landed and then touch their mouth, nose, or eyes. These people are now infected. People who get computer viruses do not intentionally spread it either. Many viruses are designed to go into your address book and send a copy, or multiple copies of itself to everyone listed.

Not all viruses are as bad as the flu, but even a little cough or sore throat can make life uncomfortable and slows you down. In the same way, "less destructive viruses" can bog down your computer's microprocessor and make programs run slower than normal.



**THE BOTTOM LINE:**  
Never open an attachment unless you are specifically expecting it. If something looks suspicious,  
**JUST DELETE IT!**

*See Anti-Virus Software article on back page.*

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# PC & MAC Health

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Self Help for PC & Macintosh Users

## Anti-Virus Software: It's like a flu shot for your computer

Anti-virus software is a good defense against computer viruses in the same way that getting flu shot can help protect you against getting the flu. Immunity from the flu does not last more than 10-12 months, so everyone knows that they need to get a flu shot *every* year. Updating your virus definitions is equally important – if not every day, at least once a week. Flu shots and anti-virus software are not 100% effective. The flu viruses mutate continually and at least a dozen new computer viruses are created every day. The virus always precedes the cure, and a lot of damage can be done before the medicine arrives.

Two of the most popular anti-virus programs are Norton Anti-Virus and McAfee Virus Clinic. However, just having the software is not sufficient. **Update your virus software regularly.** If you are connected to the internet with DSL or cable, set your anti-virus software to perform automatic updates daily. If you have a dial-up connection to the internet, you'll need to get into the habit of updating your virus definitions. You'll give yourself peace of mind.



## Backing Up Your Files

Even before September 11<sup>th</sup>, it was important to regularly back-up your computer files. Now, it seems to be a “given”, but some people still haven't gotten the message. So, here it is once more:

**BACK-UP. BACK-UP. BACK-UP.**

*I have thousands of files. How can I back them up efficiently and economically?*

## REMOVABLE STORAGE

3 very good solutions are Zip drives, SmartMedia and CompactFlash memory cards. You can think of the memory card as a “floppy disk” with gargantuan capacity. A 64 MB card holds as much data as 45 floppy disks. The only drawback is that the memory cards need a compatible reader to be accessed by your computer. PC card adapters are available for laptops and are inserted into the PC card slot (*normally at the side of the laptop*).



SmartMedia and CompactFlash are also used in digital cameras. Think of these as “electronic film”. Depending on the resolution you use when taking pictures, select the appropriate capacity card. Cards with more space can hold either 1) more pictures at low or medium resolutions or 2) fewer pictures at higher-resolution.

Other recommended forms of back-up are re-writable CDs, Sony Memory Sticks, multimedia cards, and tape back-up devices.

Remember, you only need to back-up your DATA, not all your programs. Backing-up Windows alone can take upwards of 20 (64 MB) CompactFlash cards depending on your system.

