

Computer Viruses—How you can help stop the spread



Anyone using the Internet and email at home, school, or work faces the danger of computer viruses. These destructive programs can cost time and money, cause automatic file deletion, and even render your computer useless!

Many people feel intimidated or scared by computers. This is understandable, and you are not alone. But with the recent overwhelming spread of the "MyDoom" and other less publicized viruses and worms, it is very important to protect our computers against these threats.

Currently, email is the primary method for the delivery of computer viruses. Many of the viruses coming to GMCS are from people who have GMCS email addresses on their computers. It is also likely that these people are completely unaware that their computers are infected. Please help GMCS avoid costly virus problems by scanning your computers at home to check them for viruses.

Ok, so how do I know if an email I received contains a virus?

The policy at GMCS is to **NOT** open email attachments that are unexpected or suspect in nature. Be cautious. If you receive an email message that looks suspicious (fractured English, misspellings, warnings of "dire consequences," etc.), and the email message strongly encourages you to open an attachment, then you should simply delete the email message. Even if the email appears to come from someone you know, you should know the sender is sending you an email, with an attachment, and know the contents. If you don't know the contents, don't click on the attachment and open it. If you have doubts, confirm with the sender by telephone that they have sent an attachment. If you need to send an attachment, preface it with a short note to your recipient explaining what the attachment is about. These steps will stop most, if not all, incoming email viruses from infecting your computer.

How do I protect my home computer?

At GMCS we have anti-virus software installed; it is updated frequently and is always running on the computers. If you don't have one, then please get and install an anti-virus program on your computer. If one is already installed, then it's vital that it is **UPDATED** on a regular basis—at least once a week to be safe. If you are unsure of an email, **DELETE IT**. Don't take any chances. If you suspect you have a virus then use that wonderful anti-virus program you just installed or updated and scan your computer for viruses. These steps will greatly increase your chances of a virus-free computer.

What about us folks who can't afford expensive anti-virus software?

This is understandable, but there are alternatives, and if you can't afford to buy one of the big names like McAfee, Norton (Symantec), or some other over-priced product, then you should try one of the alternatives. Below are links to sources for further information and some anti-virus choices to be considered. We hope these will be helpful to you.

Viruses become threats to businesses, schools, and homes because everyone is not working together to protect themselves and others. Please, check your computers for viruses. Some people will be shocked to find out how many viruses are already on their computers.

Most of the programs and services below have free trial versions that work for a limited time or with limited features. Also, there are links to completely free programs or services. Please check your computers for viruses!

Educational Links:

- **Cknow.com** A virus tutorial <http://www.cknow.com/vtutor/index.htm>
- **About.com** This is a great place to find information on many subjects. The following link is about basic file and folder structure, which will help you understand how a virus might affect you. <http://antivirus.about.com/library/lessons/blfiles.htm>
- **Team Anti-Virus** This website can answer practically any question you may have. <http://www.teamanti-virus.org/edu.html>

Anti-Virus Software and Web Service Links:

Cost = \$30 and up:

- **Norton Antivirus** http://www.symantec.com/product/index_homecomp.html
- **Sophos Anti-Virus** <http://www.sophos.com/products/sav/>
- **McAfee** <http://us.mcafee.com/default.asp>
- **Panda** <http://www.pandasoftware.com/products/titanium2004/>

Cost = Free:

- **E-Trust:** Currently, Computer Associates and Microsoft are offering CA's *EZ Armor Security Suite*—anti-virus, firewall and more—free for 12 months. Offer is good through 2/5/2005. <http://www.my-etrust.com/microsoft>
- **AVG:** Anti-virus software you can download for free. They have a professional version that costs about \$30 as well. http://www.grisoft.com/us/us_dwnl_free.php
- **Panda Active Scan:** This is not a program but a free web service. It will scan your machine across the Internet. <http://www.pandasoftware.com/activescan/>
- **PC Pitstop:** This is another online service, and it will do more than scan for viruses, too. This site is highly recommended to check up on the health of your computer. <http://www.pcpitstop.com>