THIS & THAT

by
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Computer Viruses and Virus Hoaxes

More and more of us are getting wired to the 'net, i.e. we are using the Internet. With 'net (short of Internet) use we become vulnerable to computer viruses. Now don't get upset. I'm not implying that if you use the 'net you will get a computer virus. All I am saying is that the 'net is one source for viruses.

Computer viruses are pesky programs that attach themselves to programs on you computer's hard drive, thus infecting them.

When an infected program is run on your computer, the pesky (albeit sometime downright destructive) instructions attached to it can alter or delete stuff stored on your hard drive. When this happens, your computer will not work properly. In fact the result is often that your computer *locks up*, and nothing works.

We can prevent the vast majority of these computer infections by installing an anti-virus program on our computer. Symantec's Norton Antivirus and McAfee's Antivirus programs are both popular and excellent.

I prefer Norton's anti-virus program because I believe it is the easiest to keep updated, but both are very good.

The job of an anti-virus program is to check your hard drive and floppy disks to see if they are infected. And if so, remove any viruses it finds. When this is done your computer is returned to its original healthy state.

Every computer using the 'net should have an anti-virus program installed on it.

Then too, because new viruses are written all the time (by the *bad* guys), you need to update your anti-virus program with the latest fixes at least once a month.

With Norton, you start your Internet Service (e.g. AOL, Earthlink, MSN, etc), then use your Start button to find Norton Antivirus on your Programs menu. From there you click on "Live Update" and the update program takes care of the rest. Of course once your fixes have been updated, the "Live Update" program will end and you can end your use of the 'net if you want. It's a simple as that.

Now, there is another kind of virus floating around. You usually become aware of it when you find an email about it in your mailbox. The email could declare that you already have a virus on your computer. Then it continues to tell you how to get rid of it. The email gives step by step instructions on what to do. Realize that at the time you first read the email there really isn't anything wrong with your computer. The author of the email wants you to think there is, but there really isn't. And so if you follow the directions given in the email, you actually do something harmful to your computer. You are the one who breaks it.

Emails like this are hoaxes, and not to be believed. Never do what they suggest. Rather

go to the Internet, to a web page that lists computer virus hoaxes and see if what you received is listed there.

There are several reliable sites which you can use. To use them you must type their address into your Internet Browser's address window. Each address listed below begins with **http://**. Begin typing that and continue until the entire address is typed. Then press the keyboard's Enter key or click on the Go button on you browser. Here are three sites to check if you suspect you have received a hoax:

Norton's sight is -
http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html

McAfee's sight is -
http://vil.mcafee.com/hoax.asp

Another excellent site which also explains all this is -
http://www.icsalabs.com/html/communitie s/antivirus/hoaxes.shtml

Remember, you don't have to be paranoid if you think everyone out there is trying to get you (on the 'net that is). They really might be. So to be safe buy an Antivirus program if you don't have one, install it, and keep it updated...monthly.