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MEDcom Update

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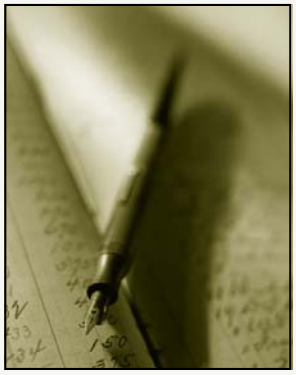
How to Choose Protection for your PC

The question of how to protect your PC from all sorts of "Malware" (click here for the definition of malware) is not simple. With little doubt, some of the power horses of the industry are software products such as Norton and McAfee, but these products also consume an over abundance of your computers resources and can make your computer run very slow and unresponsive. These products can also be very obtrusive with constant pop up notifications and reminders. These are not always your best solution.

So what is a good choice to protect against the 'nasties' of the internet? Well, one good immediate solution for your office is if a PC does not need internet access, do not allow it. It can be blocked through your router's hardware firewall. If this is not an option and internet access is a necessity (which today is becoming more and more the case), what are the other options?



There are several levels of protection available to you today. Some of them come together all bundled in one software package or they can be applied in pieces. Not all situations call for all of the pieces.

1. **Hardware Firewall.** This option is your first line of defense. Your router is designed to limit outside access to your PC or network from the internet. It stops intruders from getting in and causing malicious damage. BUT, it does not keep you from unknowingly bringing in dangerous malware. It also does not keep malware such as certain spyware and key-loggers from sending information out to other web locations.

2. **Software Firewall.** This option should be used in conjunction with a hardware firewall. This does the same, but also if configured properly will help keep your system from sending out information, which your hardware firewall does not.

3. **Malware Protection Software.** There is an over abundance of software to protect your PC from viruses, spyware, adware, key-loggers, etc. Our experience is that **none** of them are 100%. We have had PC's with full Norton or McAfee software with firewall et al. that have come to us loaded with malware. Typically these PC's are so overwhelmed with problems that the protection software seems to take over the PC attempting the fix the problems. Usually to no avail. At MedCom we really like AVG from Grisoft. It is not as robust, but a lot less resource intensive and does an excellent job. We usually use it in conjunction with another Spyware/Adware protection software.

4. **You**. A little common sense and knowledge will not protect you completely, but it can sure help. One of the nastiest and most intrusive malware that we have encountered lately is one by the name of 'Antivirus 2009'. The scenario goes like this: You are browsing the internet when suddenly you receive a message something to the affect; "WARNING your PC may be infected!" which then continues to tell you how bad your PC may be. It seems simple enough, it offers you a 'free' check to find and fix the problems. Guess what! The fix actually creates the problems. It is BOGUS!

   If you get this message, go to the task manager and end task on your browsing session. **NEVER** tell the warning to continue and fix it!

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Common sense and good judgment is some of the most important ingredients. No matter how good your protection hardware/software is, bad and unsafe internet browsing practices will be detrimental to your system.

So what is the answer? It is not simple, but some combination or all of the above. The lower the risk (i.e. the less the PC is directly into the internet) the less that is required. As you go backwards on the list, the stronger the piece, the less the requirement on the next option, but that is not to say that it is not needed.

Lastly, if you are not sure, ask your consultant or call us at MedCom.

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