



My PC is infected again?

Rob Demers

At M&H Consulting, we have noticed an increasing trend of virus infections that, after removal, come back and re-infect the computer after a time of normal use. In the past this has certainly been possible, however it was much less common than it is in the present. What should one expect in a situation like this?

A little background in how the more common viruses operate might shed a little light on the subject. Most viruses come into the computer using what is called a Trojan horse. As the term implies, it is a small program that when running opens a backdoor into your computer for a hacker or their automated program to remotely be able to compromise the system. This can mean controlling the computer, stealing critical system information, and being able to download and run programs. The longer a Trojan horse is active on a computer, the larger the infection tends to be, which translates to more virus and malware files and programs running. This also makes it more difficult to remove the malware from the computer, if it is even possible in a reasonable amount of time.

A typical scenario where this might apply would be when a user unknowingly gets infected with a virus. This could come

from an infected e-mail attachment, an infected website, even from an infected add-on from a secure website – those adds are typically outsourced to third party vendors who may or may not be constantly vigilant on their content. They now may get pop-ups when going to websites, pop-up windows that might look innocent but are in fact infecting the computer with additional rogue programs (such as Antivirus 2012 or Malware 2012 – and want to charge you to remove the software they loaded in the first place!) They will often get false readings in these pop up windows that say their system is infected with thousands of virus and malware files when in fact they are not, and by following the prompts get in-



fect.

We have seen that typically a virus removal can take 2-3 hours (sometimes less, sometimes more, depending on the severity of the infection). Industry respected removal tools are typically used and one can

be reasonably certain the infection will not come back; however, this cannot be guaranteed. The people who write these viruses and Trojan horses are quite crafty – they have developed ways of imbedding their programs into the actual operating system so that anything short of a full format and re-installation of windows will not work. Also, we find that for serious infections, it makes more sense to just format and re-install after spending a little time removing the virus. It does not make economic sense to spend 5 to 6 hours removing an infection that is not guaranteed to be completely clean when we can spend a little less time (and our client's money) to fully re-install windows and transfer any data back onto the computer, and guarantee removal.

A good practice for any individual is to periodically update and run anti malware utilities. M&H Consulting does this every visit for clients who are enrolled in our Tech for a Day maintenance program, as part of proactively detecting and preventing malware infections. Users are encouraged to do this with their home computers as well. For any further information or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at 866-964-8324, or e-mail us at support@mhconsults.com.

Deciding on a Screen Size: Weigh Your Options

The screen is the primary point of focus on a computer. Replacing the arrays of blinking status lights on early computers, monitors now provide a rich multimedia viewing experience, but the name has endured. A Council for Research Excellence study found that American adults spend an average of 8 1/2 hours looking at screens, while in a scientifically conducted telephone poll by Poll Position, 64 percent of respondents said that they spent four to more than 10 hours a day looking at a screen. According to a 2001 Educational Testing Service research report on the effects of screen size and resolution on test results, several studies also found that larger, higher-resolution screens positively affected user performance, particularly on reading. The screen you purchase should be appropriately sized for your daily tasks, but you don't want to spend more than you have to. Larger monitors are typically more expensive than smaller monitors with the same features, but size is only one factor of monitor price.

Primary Monitor: For the display you use every day, consider the tasks you most often perform on your computer. If this monitor is for a family entertainment computer, then go for the displays between 24 and 30 inches, such as the Samsung Class 300 at 27 inches. At this size, everyone can sit farther away from the screen without losing display quality. Newer screens designed for entertainment are more likely to support multi-touch, preparing you for touch-enabled desktop apps and operating systems, such as Windows 8. If you're a digital artist or photographer, you want a display like the NEC MultiSync PA241W, sized at 24 inches so you can see life-size wide-gamut color images while still sitting close enough to work at a desk. Try a screen around 20 to 22 inches, such as the business-oriented Lenovo ThinkVision L2250P, for frequent document editing.

Aspect Ratio: The 4:3 ratio of the Asus VB195T is closest to Letter size, making visualizing documents for print simpler than on a wider screen. For heavy document editing, consider a pivoting screen. You can rotate them while working so that they are taller than they are wide. The HP DS245V, with a ratio of 16-to-10, is closest to Legal paper size. A 16:10 ratio monitor has the highest pixel counts, also a plus for artists. For multimedia viewing and gaming, a widescreen aspect ratio of 16:9, the same format as HDTV, eliminates black bars or distorted picture. This aspect ratio is the most common one sold.

Considerations for Laptops: Laptop screen size affects both battery life and portability. The larger your screen, the larger the laptop frame, which increases the weight of the computer. For a laptop, a small screen is 13 inches and a large screen is around 18 inches. The larger screens can also be hard to hold or use in smaller spaces, such as trains or airplanes -- a concern if you travel frequently. Comparing the 14 inch Dell XPS 14z with the Dell XPS 15z at 15 inches, the extra inch of screen gains you 1.18 pounds and 1.6 inches of width. Larger screens need more power to function too, so to maximize your battery life, you should minimize your screen size.



Maintaining Your Computer

Scott McDonald

Do you experience slowness with your computer? Frequent error messages when opening or working with files? Low hard drive space or memory problems? Antivirus problems or messages? The average computer user does not often think about the importance of maintaining their computer, but regular maintenance is necessary to keep your machine running smoothly and efficiently. Just as it is important to maintain your car or home.



Without regular maintenance, any computer's performance will deteriorate over time. Computer hard drives become full of unnecessary system files and become fragmented, which slows responsiveness as it takes longer to find

all the different parts of a document. Additionally, potential problems that could have been recognized and avoided during maintenance can easily go undetected until a major issue occurs such as a failing hard drive or excessive build up of dust inside a computer case.

Some other examples of this is an outdated or expired antivirus program or there could even be a problem where it stops working all together. While most antivirus programs on the market are reasonably effective, they can sometimes experience problems like any other program; and can stop working correctly. In order to protect your computer, your antivirus program must be constantly updated with virus definitions. Without updates, an antivirus program loses its value very quickly. If some change on your computer interrupts your antivirus virus definitions updates, you may not notice this issue until a virus has infected your computer. A virus can take several hours for a technician to remove, depending on many

factors, and often could have been prevented with 15 minutes of maintenance.

At M&H, our "Tech for a Day" maintenance service is comprehensive and includes everything from cleaning out and optimizing the performance of your hard drive; to checking the status of your antivirus software and scanning for malicious software/spyware; check your system for important software updates; as well as the physical state of the hard drive. We also check the backups of your data to ensure there is a viable backup in the event of a catastrophic failure of the computer. We also check the general health of your machine and make recommendations in order to help you avoid pitfalls and keep your systems running smoothly.

If you have any questions about computer maintenance, or about our "Tech for a Day" service, call us anytime at (866)9-MHTECH, or email us at support@mhconsults.com.

TAKE \$\$\$CASH\$\$\$ FROM M&H CONSULTING

Refer a new Tech-For-A-Day client to M&H Consulting and mention this offer to us, and you will receive \$25 for each PC the new client has. Call for details.



"You might want to send a tech up here. Someone just went for jumper cables."