

# Keeping Your Computer Garbage Free

Maintaining your computer's working condition consists of three basic areas of attention, *Good (Internet) Habits, Regular Scans, and Basic Maintenance.*

## 1. Good (Internet) Habits

Avoid downloading of so-called "free" programs. A full featured program such as screensavers, games, peer-to-peer downloaders, are very rarely free. In most cases, free downloadable programs include some type of adware or spyware.

These threats (adware/spyware) are, at best, an annoyance which slows your system, at worst, malicious software which corrupts the basic operation of Windows. Presence of these threats is often associated with virus infection as well. This is because adware/spyware can also continually download more threats without your knowledge, leaving the system open for other types (virus) infections.

For this reason, Computer Medic, advises you to be very cautious before you download anything off of the internet. As a general guideline, if your free program comes from "www.advertisement.com", or some similar type of site, chances are you are about to infect your system. If the program comes from a known reputable manufacturer (such as Microsoft, or Adobe) chances are it will be clean. However you should still read all the fine print before you download and during install.

Stay away from add-on toolbars for Internet Explorer. Many times they change the functioning of IE, and not for the better.

Only use known search engine sites for research. Using the search bar on "www.bestwebdeals.com" will only yield site results which point you to malicious web sites.

Never open an email attachment from within the email itself. Always save the email to disk first, make note of where you saved it, and then open the file you saved. This will give your scanning applications ample time to check and scan the file before you inadvertently unleash a virus.

Always be suspicious of any email from an unknown sender. Delete any emails which appear to be "SPAM" (email junk mail) before the images load if possible.

Unfortunately, these are not the only methods of infection. Sometimes even the most careful user gets hit with these threats. For this reason, Computer Medic strongly recommends you scan your system with the provided utilities on a regular basis.

## 2. Regular Scans

Hopefully, everyone is aware your system should be regularly scanned with an up-to-date antivirus program. Norton AntiVirus (NAV) provides constant background scanning of some files, but there are still selected "windows of opportunity" for your system to get infected. Doing a "Full System Scan" should catch any virus' that may be residing in your computer.

NAV should be configured to automatically run a full system scan once a week. For this reason, we recommend leaving your system powered up during this time to allow the scan. If you happen to miss this time however, you can still manually run the scan.

Simply double-click the Norton AntiVirus icon on your desktop. Wait for the program to load, it takes a few moments. Click the words “Full System Scan”. Notice the button that appeared on the right, labeled “Scan Now”? Click it to run the scan.

Keep in mind, any and all scans of your computer are only as effective as the last update of the scanning program. Always precede any scans with an update of the scanning program. All of the utilities provided by the Computer Medic have a button or link to easily update the program over the internet. NAV has a button in the upper-left corner of the program window labeled “Live Update”. Clicking this button and following the instructions is the way to keep NAV up-to-date before a full system scan.

Unfortunately, there is no single program that provides complete protection from adware/spyware. This is why Computer Medic has installed multiple anti-spyware utilities. Just like the anti-virus, your system should be regularly scanned with an up-to-date anti-spyware program. Also, if you have multiple profiles (users) on your computer, the scanning process is only effective if all users are scanned.

Spy Sweeper and Microsoft AntiSpyware are both programmed to automatically scan your computer. However, you can manually scan your system as well. Just open the program(s) and click the button(s) labeled “Scan” or “Sweep”.

Again, you should make sure these utilities are up-to-date before any scan. Both applications provide simple one-click updates.

You can find detailed instructions for updating and scanning with Ad-Aware and Pest Patrol on the Computer Medic website. Simply visit [www.computermedicpa.com](http://www.computermedicpa.com) and follow the link on the lower-left for instructions.

### **3. Basic Maintenance**

The first step in maintaining your computer is to make sure the basic Windows operating system is always up-to-date. Currently, your system is programmed to download any windows updates as you attach to the internet, and then prompt you to install the updates. These prompts will appear in the lower right of your screen. Always install any available Windows updates.

You can also manually check for any Windows updates available for your specific system by visiting the windows update web site. Open Internet Explorer, click on the “Tools” menu on the top of the program window, and click the item “Windows Update”.

Also in the “Tools” menu is the Internet Options. Here you may do things such as deleting any temporary internet files and cookies. They tend to build up, so every so often (once a month?) go ahead and remove these. Be careful, however, of changing any security settings. It is best to let these settings be adjusted automatically with the utilities and updates installed.

Uninstall any programs you no longer want or use, using the Add/Remove utility in your control panel. Lots of programs installed tends to make your system run slower, as well as giving Windows more to “think” about during startup. Also, your scans will run faster the less info is sitting in your system.

Defragment your hard drive every so often (twice a year?) by running the Disk Defragmenter utility located under your “Start” menu. Simply point to Start\All Programs\Accessories\System Tools\Disk Defragmenter, and follow the directions.