

## Virus Damage Control

It's a cruel, cruel world out there, and every time you turn your machine on you're sailing into potentially shark infested waters. But there are things you can do to minimize your exposure to the hazards of viruses, worms, trojans, adware, spyware and bots. Have I left anything out? Probably. There are more of them than there are of me.

If you've already been hit by a virus or spyware, don't despair. Just contact The Computer Mensch. I do make house calls for this sort of thing. And if you don't have high speed Internet, don't worry. I can pick up your machine, scrub it and return it to you. No extra charge. Really. Of course, you'll still want to try to protect yourself.

The first thing you need to do is get yourself a decent security suite. Typically, a security suite will consist of several parts:

- Anti-spyware
- Firewall
- Anti-spam
- Anti-spyware

I would recommend one of two suites, depending on what you want to spend. My suite of choice is Trend Micro's PC-Cillin. It's easy to install, and you don't have to be a Tim Berners-Lee to set it up and maintain it. It won't take up massive amounts of resources to run and I've found it to be robust and secure. A single purchase will allow you to protect up to three machines. You can click one of the links to the right and get started right away.

If you feel like spending more money, Kaspersky Internet Security Suite 6.0 is an excellent choice. It consistently gets very high ratings and is said to be among the best solution on the market. Be forewarned, however, that it will cost almost 50% more and will only secure a single machine. Difference in price should you want to load this onto three machines? \$50 for PC-Cillin, \$210 for Kaspersky.

Because spyware and adware are somewhat different than the typical virus, they usually require more than one program to keep everything squeaky clean (or as close to squeaky clean as we're ever going to get). Microsoft offers a freebie called Windows Defender. It's decent, but I've seen it go bad on a number of computers. Weird, huh? The following are also good freebies that you should have:

- Lavasoft's Adaware SE Personal
- Safer Networking's Spybot Search & Destroy
- JavaCool's Spyware Blaster

Finally, make sure that your Windows operating system (for those of us who are using Windows, that is) is kept up to date. This goes for any OS, but it is particularly important for Windows XP, as it is an alluring target for hackers and virus authors. If you don't know how to keep your Windows XP up to date, you can visit my Hints and Tips or you can manually update your Windows operating system at Microsoft Update. A note to Mac users. Yes, Mac OS X has proven durable and may seem invulnerable. However, in 2006 there were several warning shots across the bow (there goes that sailing metaphor again. Funny. Every time I go sailing I just get sick). Getting attacked is nothing more than a numbers game. Once Apple recovers some of their market share, it will become worth attacking them (it's simple geek-psychology). Now that they've gone all Intel on us, there is a good chance that sales will be picking up - perhaps even in the White-Collar-Flannel-Suit-And-Tie workplace. Don't wait until things go bad. Check into some protection now. You won't regret it.