

microsoft.public.windowsxp.security_admin: errors saying that I have a malicious program

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When I try using various search engine, I get different error messages telling me that I have downloaded a malicious program. I am not sure if I should follow there instructions. When I run Norton AntiVirus Full System Scan, nothing shows up.

When I am on msn.com and try to use their search engine, I get the message:

Are you looking for a search engine?
If you are seeing this page, it is because you have downloaded a malicious program that is keeping you from visiting the page you intended.

Please visit the following URL for information on fixing this problem:

http://www.tweakxp.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=3367

And when I try to use google.com, I cannot enen get to the website. I get the message:

Are you trying to get to Google?
Your computer is running software that doesn't allow you to use Google.
You're seeing this page because your computer is trying to send you to a website that is pretending to be Google.
Over the past few weeks, you may have seen a website that looks like Google, but launches pop-up windows and does not work like Google. That page is not affiliated with Google in any way and is intended to deceive you.

Why is this happening?
Most likely a program was installed on your computer automatically and without your knowledge when you downloaded an otherwise harmless piece of software. Or you may have been tricked into clicking on a disguised

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download button while visiting a website.

What can I do about it?

This problem can be fixed fairly easily, but will require that you make changes in a file that is part of your computer's operating system. You should always be cautious when making these kinds of adjustments, as they may affect the performance of your computer. If you are not comfortable doing this yourself, you may want to print out this page and show it to someone whose technical knowledge you trust.

What steps do I take?

The first step is to remove the entry for Google from your hosts file. This entry is telling your computer where to send your computer instead of to Google.

In Windows, open the Notepad program. You can do this by going to the Start menu in the lower left of your screen, selecting "Programs," then "Accessories," then "Notepad."

In the Notepad menu, click on "File," then "Open." You will see a new window asking which file to open. You may need to change "Files of type" to "All Files" instead of "Text Documents". The actual file to open is listed below:

If your computer is running Windows XP, Window NT, or Windows 2000, the file is located in the folder found by following this path:

My Computer >Local Disk(C) >Windows >System32 >Drivers
>etc >hosts

If your computer is running Windows 98, Second Edition or Windows ME, the file is located in the folder found by following this path:

My Computer >Local Disk(C) >Windows >hosts

Once you have opened this file, remove entirely any line of text that contains "google.com", "www.google.com" or other Google domains (such as "google.co.uk"). To remove the text, highlight it by dragging your pointer across the line while holding down the mouse button. Once the text is highlighted, hit the Backspace or Delete button, then save the file by going to the File menu and clicking "Save." You can now exit Notepad.

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What else can I do?

You might want to try software that attempts to detect and uninstall programs like this one. While we do not have a relationship with anyone who offers this software and we cannot endorse a particular product, the most popular programs for doing this seem to be Spybot Search and Destroy and LavaSoft's AdAware. The particular program affecting your computer is relatively new, so these products might not be able to detect and repair this type of problem yet.

The next step is to learn more. You can visit <http://www.doxdesk.com/parasite/> to review information about a number of known self-installing software programs. Several articles on the web may be helpful, such as

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<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/04/14/1050172507212.html>
· <http://news.com.com/2100-1023-877568.html>
· <http://news.com.com/2100-1023-257592.html>

Investigate individual programs using search engines. Try keywords such as "spyware," "scumware," and "adware." Once you're informed, take action. Help your family and friends avoid these annoying programs. If you can find the site that installed this software on your computer, let them know how you feel about it. You might also want to track down companies that benefit from having your web visits redirected, and share your feelings with them.

Finally, it's quick and easy to file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). This U.S. government agency handles complaints about deceptive or unfair business practices. To file a complaint, visit: <http://www.ftc.gov/> and click on "File a Complaint Online", or call 1-877-FTC-HELP. Or write to:

Federal Trade Commission
CRC-240
Washington, D.C. 20580

If your complaint is against a company in another country, you can file it at <http://www.econsumer.gov/>.

When I got to netscape.com, I can use their search engine and it works just fine. I have not tried any other sites. I would appreciate if someone would tell me what to do.

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