

What about Adware?



What Is Adware?

Have you ever wondered what those advertisements on your computer screen that keep popping up are called? Well, it is called adware. Adware is acquired through ads on websites, which are commonly known as pop-ups. You usually get adware when you download some kind of free software. Many times it comes bundled with free files and programs you download from the Internet. Often, you are unaware that adware is even being installed.

Adware keeps track of your Internet habits, such as the sites you visit, in order to collect information for targeted advertising (Yamshon, 2010). The information that adware collects may appear as targeted ads, search toolbars, or pop-up windows. Adware is a combination of advertisement and malware. Many times adware piggybacks on other programs that you download. In return, when you run the program that you want on your device, adware is also running in the background.

Do I Have Adware on My Device?

Are you unsure if you have adware on your device? Below is a list of some signs indicating that you may have adware:

- Continuous pop-up ads on your device while browsing on the Internet
- New toolbar(s) appear in your browser
- Slow Internet connection
- Device freezes for no reason

Twelve of the top 20 causes of infection for home computers are due to adware (Lemos, 2015). With the spread of broadband Internet, there has been an increase in adware.

Adware Prevention

There are some preventive measures that you can take to keep adware at bay. For example, make sure that you are running the latest versions of operating systems, browsers, etc. When looking at what antivirus to purchase, check to see if it also contains adware-removal software. Before downloading a program on your computer, read the end user license agreement (EULA). Many times you are giving consent to load ads on your computer, too. You don't have to fear every mouse click, but you should take precautions to ensure your safety. The Internet does expose your device to a number of risks despite its usefulness.

Some Quick Tips to Keep Adware Away from Your Device:

- Purchase an anti-adware software program and always keep it up to date.
- Avoid downloading free software on the Internet.
- Keep your operating system updated.

According to Sriramachandramurthy, R., Balasubramanian, S. K., & Hodis, M. A. (2009), being knowledgeable about technical problems is a great defensive measure to protecting your devices.

Can Adware Be Removed?

You can remove most adware that was installed on your computer through your add and remove programs feature located in your control panel. You can arrange the programs by installation date to know what programs were bundled together. Look for potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) that have bundled software attached to programs such as toolbars, weather apps, search bars, and shopping helpers, and uninstall these programs from your device. After you have uninstalled

the PUPs it is recommended that you reset your web browsers and restart your device to remove all files associated with the PUPs.

You should be very careful when choosing adware removal software. Before removing any adware from your device, make sure that you have any important files saved in other places. An antivirus with adware removal software can be used to remove as well as fix errors on your device. This software should be run on a regular basis to keep your device protected.

Conclusion

With the spread of broadband Internet, there has been an increase in adware, and it isn't going away anytime soon. You can protect your device from adware by educating yourself on the possible dangers and by controlling what gets in, what stays out, and what remains on your device.

References

- Lemos, R. (2015). Spyware Infects Phones, Adware Increases on Home PCs, Report Finds. Eweek.
- Sriramachandramurthy, R., Balasubramanian, S. K., & Hodis, M. A. (2009). Spyware and Adware: How Do Internet Users Defend Themselves?. *American Journal Of Business*, 24(2), 41–52.
- Yamshon, L. (2010). Second wave of adware pounds web surfers. *PC World (San Francisco, CA)*, 28(12), 41–42.

Publication 3085 (POD-06-17)

By **Jamie Varner**, Extension Instructor, Extension Center for Technology Outreach.



Copyright 2017 by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved. This publication may be copied and distributed without alteration for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Produced by Agricultural Communications.

We are an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director