Why Adware is So Prevalent

Malware is a term that covers many different types of threats to your computer. You are continually bombarded with warnings about Spyware, Adware, Viruses, Ransomware & Remote Access Trojans, which are all types of Malware, but do you really know the difference?

Adware is the most common and least dangerous type of malware, but it can be really annoying. These programs track your habits, spending, and other user information in the form of "cookies." Cookies are mini programs that are stored on your computer that allow sites to retain basic information about you. Normally harmless, cookies are the reason that, if you look at shoes on one site, you may find that same product appearing in windows on another. In other words, your behavior and preferences are being tracked and cataloged, without your permission. (Luckily, you can turn your cookies off.) So basically, while malware is meant to be malicious and do damage to you and your device, adware is more of a nuisance, tracking you and relaying information to a 3rd party get you to buy something.

Adware Symptoms:
Slow web browser performance, annoying ads (searches, banners, text links, transitional, interstitial, and full page advertisements), browser redirects.

Distribution:
Adware is often included within freeware or shareware programs, and the installation of potentially unwanted applications can be caused by deceptive free software download clients and installers. Adware is also installed via fake Flash Player, Java, or Internet browser updates. Potentially unwanted programs are distributed by the use of misleading banners and other online ads.

How to avoid adware infections?
To avoid installation of adware, Internet users should express great caution when downloading and installing free software. If your download is managed by a download client, be sure to opt-out of installation of any advertised browser plug-ins by clicking on a 'Decline' button. When installing previously downloaded freeware, always choose 'Advanced' or 'Custom' installation options, rather than 'Quick' or 'Typical', since choosing the default options can lead to unwanted installation of bundled

adware. Also, avoid participating in surveys or contests that may popup when you go to certain websites.

Here is where it gets interesting, the legality of spyware is a tricky business. It is regulated in the U.S. by such laws as the United States Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. However, there is a catch. While some of the many malicious malware creators have been arrested and cited under federal law, a large number are legitimate businesses that distribute adware are working openly and prospering nicely. In their cases, you have actually invited them into you computer, knowingly or not. Let's say you decide to buy a downloadable game from a site. Before they allow you to spend your money, they demand that you consent to their "terms of licensing agreement" before installing. That multi-page document that you probably scrolled through as fast as humanly possibly without really reading is a fine bit of clever marketing wording that says, in effect, that they are going to install a program that tracks your every move and targets you for ads based on these moves. Since you consented to this in the terms & conditions, the courts have agreed that it's not an illegal download.

Removing Adware
Adware is usually easily removed. You can use relative inexpensive, or even free Malware removal programs to scan and remove aware. (But research what you are using first so you don't use a program that installs something worse on your computer. I am partial to MalwareBytes.) Or, if you are a do-it-yourself type of person, you can remove adware manually by Googling how to do this in relation to your operating system.

Adware may be legal, but it is certainly irritating, and we feel there is a fine line for when harmless adware because dangerous spyware. If you inadvertently download it, you need to get rid of it ASAP.

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