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annoying adware?

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[Main](#)

[Cyber Spy?](#)

[Annoying Adware?](#)

KNOW MORE ABOUT SPYWARE THAT COULD BE SNEAKING ITS WAY ONTO YOUR COMPUTER!

"These adware components have the capability to monitor a computer user's every key stroke command," says Debbie St. Clair, creator of Unwantedlinks.com, a site that advises consumers about what it calls "sleezeware".

"We're talking over 50 million people... that might be infected... If 50 million people in the United States had their phone tapped by a company or multiple companies, there would be an outrage," says St. Clair.

According to St. Clair, "Some of these [spyware programs] can be picked up just viewing a Web site. Just viewing a Web site... They're in there constantly watching everything that you do and transmitting it back to people that you don't know... Once you click okay, even if you haven't read it, you've agreed to it."

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility call it 'sleezeware'...

"Since sleezeware is designed to sneak into your computer to collect information and to share that information without your knowledge, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility is entirely against it," says Coralee Whitcomb, President of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR). CPSR is a 21-year old consumer-advocate membership organization concerned about the impact of technology on society.

"Not only can sleezeware look at everything on your computer and share that information with other people or other servers outside, it can also change settings on your computer, change your home page, change default settings, collect information on your Web browsing... there are no limitations," says Whitcomb.



did you know?

What is spyware?

Spyware is software or hardware installed on a computer without the user's knowledge. It gathers information about that user for later retrieval by whoever controls the spyware.

This includes advertisers and other interested 3rd-party organizations.

Spyware can be broken down into two different categories:

- Surveillance software
- Adware

Surveillance software includes:

- Key loggers
- Screen capture devices
- Trojans

These applications are used by corporations, private detectives, law

enforcement, intelligence agencies, suspicious spouses, etc.

Adware is software that is installed alongside other software often without the user's knowledge, or without full disclosure that it will be used for gathering personal information and/or showing the user ads. Adware logs information about the user, possibly including passwords, email addresses, web browsing history, online buying habits, the computer's hardware and software configuration, the name, age, sex, etc of the user.

How does it work?

- As with SPAM, adware uses the CPU, RAM, and resources of the user's computer, making the user pay for the costs associated with operating it.
- It then makes use of the user's bandwidth to connect to the Internet and upload whatever personal information it has gathered, and to download advertisements, which it will present to the user, either by way of pop up windows, or with the ad banners of ad-supported software.

(Spyware.com – a consumer site dedicated to privacy issues)

“Even if you're not concerned with sharing your personal information, you can end up with a computer that doesn't work nearly as well as it did not long before,” according to Whitcomb, who says that spyware can actually slow down your computer.

How can spyware sneak inside your computer? Whitcomb says some of the ways include when computer users:

- Use instant messenger
- Click on advertisements including, 'Pop Up Ads'
- Utilize or download a peer-to-peer file-sharing program, such as

Napster, Bearshare, Kazaa, Imesh, Limewire

“Anytime something is opened... a file is opened through Instant Messenger... it opens the door to sleezeware being loaded on your computer... If you click on any kind of free offer or invitation to a Web site, you are risking sleezeware,” she says.

For a complete list of spyware products to watch out for, [click here](#). [Sign-up for our e-Visory](#) and the information will be sent to you.

Some say spyware adds benefits to consumers... Hear from the Association for Interactive Marketing's Ben Isaacson.

“The use of this [spyware] technology can be very acceptable when it's used to enhance the performance of the software,” says Issacson, Executive Director of AIM, which is an association dedicated to helping marketers use the Internet and new technologies.

“It's acceptable when permission is granted, and when a consumer or business user is fully aware of the software that they're downloading,” he says.

According to Isaacson, “Businesses would like to know what consumers are doing... Advertisers using this software can be able to increase the effectiveness of their advertisements.”

Isaacson says spyware is a growing trend, “but what is also growing is consumer concern.” So, he recommends that consumers carefully read licensing agreements for every company Web site that they wish to click on. “They should read it and know what they're downloading.”

He also says the industry is trying to regulate itself,

including better warnings when the spyware is about to be downloaded. "Making that information more legible and more understandable is very important."

Coping with Spyware: Here are some tips...

✓ **Read the license agreement carefully:** Check for clauses about software that seem unrelated to the application you intend to install on your PC.

✓ **Get software that fights adware:** Ad-aware, PestPatrol, and Spybot-Search & Destroy can remove offending software; ZoneAlarm lets you know when your PC tries to send data to the Internet.

✓ **Adjust your browser settings:** Make sure that your Internet Explorer security levels (select *Tools, Internet Options, Security*) are set to Medium (or higher), which prevents automatic software installations.

✓ **Remove any unwanted spyware programs:** To do so, go to *Tools, Internet Options, General, Settings, View Objects*. Right-click any questionable programs and select *View Properties* to see where they came from. If you want to uninstall one, right-click it again and select *Remove*.

✓ **Get uninstallers:** Some adware can't easily be removed through Control Panel's Add/Remove Programs window. If this happens, check the adware company's Web site for an uninstall program that can eliminate it completely.

(PCWorld)




Protect your personal info: The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) encourages you to make sure your transactions - online and off - are secure and your personal information is protected. The FTC offers these tips to help you manage your personal information wisely, and to help minimize its misuse.

- Before you reveal any personally identifying information, find out how it will be used and **whether it will be shared with others**. Ask about the company's privacy policy: Will you have a choice about the use of your information; can you choose to have it kept confidential?
- **Read the privacy policy on any Web site directed to children.** Web sites directed to children, or that knowingly collect information from kids under 13, must post a notice of their information collection practices under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.
- **Put passwords on your credit card, bank and phone accounts.** Avoid using easily available information like your mother's maiden name, your birth date, the

last four digits of your SSN or your phone number, or obvious choices like a series of consecutive numbers or your hometown football team.

(FTC)



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