Virus Protection for Macintosh

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Sophos is the recommended anti-virus software for Macintosh machines at MIT. Protect your computer from virus infections (also known as malware infections or system compromises) by installing Sophos and following the practices in this article.

On this page:

Do Mac OS Viruses Exist?
Installing and Running Sophos
Patches and Updates

Do Mac OS Viruses Exist?

Mac OS viruses are rare, but it's possible to pass along Windows viruses in attachments. Macro viruses are the most common type of viruses encountered by Mac users. Files of type .doc – or any file created with Microsoft Word, Excel or Powerpoint – can have macro viruses embedded in them.

Most macro viruses are created on Windows machines, but Mac users can become infected by files they receive from others or can inadvertently pass an infected file to others.

Macs can also be infected by visiting a corrupt website.

Installing and Running Sophos

1. Download the latest version of Sophos from MIT (free software).
2. Check to make sure DAT (virus definition) files are up to date by clicking on the Sophos icon in the menu bar . and selecting **Update Now**. By default, it will check for updates every hour.
3. For maximum security, you can add a custom weekly or daily scan at a time that is convenient for you and when the computer is usually turned on.
    a. Open Sophos by clicking the icon in the menu bar and selecting **Open Scans...**
    b. Click on the arrow next to **Custom Scans**, then click the **+** sign.
    c. In the next window, give your scan a name and select the **+** sign again to select which folders to include in the scan. You can exclude items, set a schedule and select an option for scanning particular files and what to do if a threat is found.
4. Check the Sophos Console to ensure that scans complete successfully, by clicking the Sophos icon in the menu bar and selecting* Open preferences...* > **Logging** > **View Log Contents**.

Patches and Updates

Keep your operating system and software current by accepting security patches and critical updates from Apple and Microsoft. Within **Preferences**, set **Update Software** to check for updates at least once a week.

For more information
For general virus protection tips, read: Virus Protection at MIT.
If you think you have a virus, read the article: Does my computer have malware on it?