Tips for avoiding Viruses

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Many viruses we face travel through the e-mail system. Here are a few tips for safely managing your e-mail:

1. ***Never open any files attached to e-mail from unknown or unsolicited sources.*** It is very possible that SPAM or junk e-mail may include harmful attachments that could contain viruses. Even following a link within the e-mail can be harmful. A good rule of thumb to follow is when in doubt, throw it out! If you are not sure about an attachment you receive, err on the side of caution and delete it.
2. ***Be cautious of all attachments you open, even those from users you know.*** Many e-mail worms can cause an infected user to unknowingly send e-mail to their friends and co-workers that appears to be directly from them. Here are some things to look for.

   Carefully examine the file extensions of e-mail attachments. Data files ending in .txt, .csv, .jpg, .mp3 & .wav would not contain executable virus code. However, files ending in .doc, .xls, .exe and even .htm have the capability of containing harmful virus code.

   Be especially watchful for attachments with uncommon file extensions (.exe, .vbs, .shs, .pif) or double file extensions (.doc.exe or .txt.vbs). These should be deleted immediately or contact the sender to verify the file.

   If you must open a questionable file, save it to a floppy disk first. Scan the file on the floppy with an updated virus software program to catch any possible viruses in the file.
3. ***Keep your e-mail software up-to-date.*** As companies find vulnerabilities in their software, such as Eudora and Microsoft Outlook, they release software updates called "patches" or "service packs". Downloading these files will update your original software and are usually free to the consumer.

   The easiest way to locate these updates is at the manufacturers' websites. These links can be found below for the following products:
   Eudora E-mail Software Security Updates http://www.eudora.com/security.html
   Microsoft Outlook/Outlook Express Updates http://www.microsoft.com/security/articles/update.asp
   Microsoft Download Center http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/search.asp?
4. ***Update your anti-virus software regularly.*** This is probably the most important safeguard you have against preventing virus infection.

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