

Infection Protection

[Computer Shopper](#), January, 2005

Viral attacks on PCs are only getting worse. These six antivirus programs can inoculate your system against malicious code.

Introduction by Sean Portnoy
January, 2005

By now, everyone knows you need to protect your PC with an antivirus program, or you'll suffer an inevitable attack from a virus, Trojan horse, worm, or other virtual nasty. Right?

Amazingly enough, more than one-third of PC users believe they are more likely to get hit by lightning or win the lottery than suffer from a cyber attack, according to a recent study by the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA). That finding comes even after several high-profile viral attacks have left millions of computers damaged over the last few years.

If you've been one of those PC owners tempting fate without any antivirus software on your system, now's the time to pick the right program to secure yourself. We looked at six antivirus packages, and while all provide strong protection against malicious code, some offer additional security features you need, such as a firewall or spyware detection. Read on to find out which one is right for you.

eTrust EZ Antivirus 2005 6.2

Computer Associates' \$29.95 eTrust EZ Antivirus 2005 6.2 offers system scans that are light on system resources and blazingly fast. Though affordable, it lacks a firewall, so if you need one, consider ZoneAlarm With Antivirus, which uses the same antivirus engine as EZ Antivirus.

Version 6.2 has an uninspired interface that features an old-fashioned file tree and tiny, indecipherable icons. (By the time you read this, Computer Associates will have released eTrust EZ Antivirus 2005 7, which features an improved GUI, including one-button scheduling of system scans.)

EZ Antivirus scans incoming messages and their attachments in popular POP3 e-mail clients, including Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express. Unlike other virus fighters, however, EZ Antivirus doesn't scan outbound e-mail, an action helpful for blocking worms embedded in outgoing messages.

In testing by the independent organization Virus Bulletin, EZ Antivirus earned the coveted VB 100 percent rating 70 percent of the time in the last 10 Windows tests—a decent showing, certainly, but not on the same level as Norton AntiVirus. Previous versions of EZ Antivirus have also been certified by the independent antivirus-testing laboratories at Checkvir.com, ICSA Labs, and West Coast Labs.

Computer Associates provides free e-mail support for EZ Antivirus users. Phone support, however, is expensive: \$49.95 for one tech issue, \$99.95 for three issues, and \$149.95 for five.

Editors' Rating: 7.5 out of 10

Pros: Speedy scanning; minimal drag on system performance.

Cons: Firewall not included; doesn't scan outbound e-mail.

F-Secure Internet Security 2005

The \$78 F-Secure Internet Security 2005 is a significant, if pricey, upgrade to last year's version, adding a host of new security tools to its antivirus engine and firewall, including spyware and spam fighters.

F-Secure's new antispyware tool is based on Lavasoft's highly regarded Ad-Aware engine, which detects and removes adware, spyware, data miners, and other secretly installed parasites. We liked the parental-control feature, which filters objectionable Web content and lets you password-protect specific sites.

Infection Protection

In addition, F-Secure's new antispam filter is easy to use. In Outlook 2000 or later, for instance, F-Secure inserts its spam-control button on the Outlook toolbar. You click the button to add an e-mail address or domain name to your list of filtered senders, increase or decrease the spam fighter's aggressiveness, and so on.

In our tests, F-Secure used less system resources than McAfee VirusScan 2005 9.0 or Norton AntiVirus 2005, but it wasn't as light in its PC demands as eTrust EZ Antivirus 2005 6.2 or PC-cillin Internet Security 2005. F-Secure also took longer to scan our hard drive than did either EZ Antivirus or PC-cillin. Since November 2000, the Windows desktop version of F-Secure has passed five out of eight Virus Bulletin tests. Previous versions of F-Secure have also been certified by Checkvir.com, ICSA Labs, and West Coast Labs.

Perhaps because the company is based in Finland, F-Secure offers fewer U.S. tech-support options than its competitors. For instance, the company doesn't provide phone assistance to users of this suite, though e-mail help is available.

Editors' Rating: 7.8 out of 10

Pros: New antispymware, antispam tools; parental-control feature.

Cons: Expensive; no phone support.

McAfee VirusScan 2005 9.0

McAfee's VirusScan 2005 9.0 is a worthwhile upgrade for current VirusScan users, who will benefit from its improved spyware detection. But the program lacks a firewall and doesn't run a system scan before or after installation, making it an incomplete security solution. Before a \$20 rebate, the program costs \$59.99 for the boxed version and \$49.99 for the download.

VirusScan stealthily scans Internet downloads—along with IM and e-mail attachments—for viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and malevolent ActiveX controls and Java applets. The program also searches for spyware and adware during system scans, but it doesn't offer real-time detection.

Outlook users will like the VirusScan icon that inserts itself on the standard toolbar. You can now run a quick e-mail scan simply by clicking this icon. VirusScan automatically scans both inbound and outbound e-mail.

The program has been tested only once by Virus Bulletin, back in June 2002, and it passed. Previous versions of VirusScan have also been certified by Checkvir.com, ICSA Labs, and West Coast Labs.

We found McAfee's e-mail and online-chat support for VirusScan to be solid this year. Online chat is available around the clock, and the company promises a response within 24 hours to e-mail queries. Phone support will cost you \$2.95 per minute after the first two free minutes, or \$39 per incident.

Editors' Rating: 7.7 out of 10

Pros: Improved spyware detection; strong e-mail, online support.

Cons: No firewall; no real-time spyware scanning.

Norton AntiVirus 2005

Symantec's \$49.95 Norton AntiVirus 2005 is a tenacious virus fighter with newly added worm protection, but the lack of a full firewall, especially given its premium price, knocks it down a peg.

Like many competitors, Norton scans and cleans IM attachments, as well as inbound and outbound e-mail. It also scans for hidden spyware threats, including adware, dialers, and keystroke loggers that record every key you tap. Its real-time scanner doesn't detect spyware, however.

This year's version adds Norton Internet Worm Protection, a lightweight firewall feature that blocks unsolicited inbound traffic, including nasty trouble-makers such as the Blaster and Sasser worms. Unlike a full firewall, however, Worm Protection won't block outbound traffic, making it no more effective than the free Microsoft firewall included in Windows XP Service Pack 2.

Norton has been tested on Windows desktop systems 10 times since November 2000 by Virus Bulletin and earned its coveted VB 100 percent title each time. Previous versions have also been certified by Checkvir.com,

Infection Protection

ICSA Labs, and West Coast Labs.

Symantec's help site includes the Automated Support Assistant, a downloadable utility that scans Norton AntiVirus for known problems. Symantec also offers e-mail support, but you'll need to run the Automated Support Assistant before firing off a query. Phone support has finally been upgraded to around-the-clock availability, but it costs \$29.95 per incident or \$2.95 per minute.

Editors' Rating: 7.7 out of 10

Pros: New inbound port blocking to prevent worm intrusions; excellent virus protection.

Cons: No full firewall; real-time scanner doesn't look for spyware.

EDITORS'
CHOICE



PC-cillin Internet Security 2005

Trend Micro's \$49.95 PC-cillin Internet Security 2005 is the best Internet protection bundle currently on the market—period. It includes top antivirus, firewall, antispam, and spyware-blocking tools, plus a multitude of extra security features—all for the same price as Norton AntiVirus.

PC-cillin has some new tools, including Home Network Control, a dialog box that lets you manage the security of every PC on a home network via a single interface. This feature is easy to use but requires the \$89.95 PC-cillin Internet Security 2005 Home Security Pack, which allows you to install PC-cillin on up to three PCs. The new Wi-Fi Intrusion Detection alerts you when a bandwidth thief or other intruder enters your wireless LAN; you can lock out rogue surfers with a click of a button. And the new antiphishing software prevents naive users from surrendering personal and financial information to known rogue sites, safeguarding data such as credit-card and Social Security numbers.

Like EZ Antivirus, PC-cillin produced no real system performance drag, and it also took much less time to scan our hard drive than did F-Secure, Norton, or VirusScan. Since November 2000, the Windows desktop version of PC-cillin has passed five of six Virus Bulletin tests. Previous versions of the program have also been certified by Checkvir.com, ICSA Labs, and West Coast Labs.

Trend Micro delivers what the rest of the antivirus pack won't: free phone support. The company also provides a toll-free number. Phone-support hours are weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (ET). Unlike McAfee, Trend Micro doesn't offer online chat, but e-mail support is available 24 hours.

Editors' Rating: 8.3 out of 10

Pros: Speedy scanning; full firewall; spyware-, spam-blocking tools; free phone support.

Cons: Need Home Security Pack for Home Network Control feature to work.

ZoneAlarm With Antivirus

No longer content to offer just its world-class ZoneAlarm firewall app, Zone Labs has added antivirus protection and offers the combination as the \$24.95 ZoneAlarm With Antivirus. It doesn't block ads, manage cookies, or have all the perks of pricier security suites, but it's a winner for bargain hunters who simply want solid, basic PC security.

Unlike most antivirus apps, ZoneAlarm With Antivirus doesn't defend against dangers such as spam, executable URLs, or IM attacks. Although competing products detect spyware running on your PC, ZoneAlarm With Antivirus doesn't. On the plus side, like most antivirus apps, ZoneAlarm With Antivirus scans e-mail attachments and quarantines suspicious files.

Rather than build its own antivirus software, Zone Labs licensed Computer Associates' Vet Antivirus engine, also used in EZ Antivirus. Zone Labs wisely pasted its very user-friendly ZoneAlarm interface over the Vet

Infection Protection

engine, and the results are positive. Unlike other antivirus programs, however, ZoneAlarm won't allow you to pause virus scans to run a computational- or disk-intensive task.

Like McAfee and Symantec, Zone Labs offers expensive phone support: \$2.95 per minute, available weekdays from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. (ET). Want no-cost help? Zone Labs allows you to interact with a Web-based knowledge base via its Instant Support feature.

At press time, Zone Labs had just announced ZoneAlarm With Antivirus 5.5, whose primary upgrade is a new Automatic Network Detection wizard.

Editors' Rating: 7.8 out of 10

Pros: Bargain price; well-designed interface.

Cons: No tools for detecting spyware, IM attacks; expensive phone support.

Antivirus FAQs

Q: What are virus definitions?

A: Virus definitions are the code that allows antivirus software to recognize new viral threats and prevent them from attacking your PC. Because new viruses are constantly emerging, new definitions must be continually written—which is why antivirus software companies recommend you update your definitions frequently. Most antivirus programs are designed to automatically check for new definitions.

Q: What does it mean when my antivirus program says that virus definitions are set to expire?

A: Antivirus programs normally provide a year's worth of updated virus definitions with the purchase of the software. Once your subscription expires, virus definitions are no longer updated, leaving your system vulnerable to new threats.

Q: What is the difference between a virus and spyware?

A: Sometimes it's hard to tell, as both can affect your system in unwanted ways. Viruses are designed to migrate from computer to computer and can wreak havoc by taking malicious action like deleting files on your hard drive. Spyware, on the other hand, usually tracks user information on individual systems, following your Web-surfing habits or trying to sniff out your passwords or other personal information.


Q: Do I get new features of the latest version of my antivirus program when I renew my virus-definition subscription?

A: If you purchased the boxed version, then probably not, which is why it's often a good deal to update your software instead of just renewing your virus-definition subscription, especially if new functionality like spyware detection has been added to the most recent version. While you can still use your old version with the new definitions, antivirus-software companies may drop tech support for your version if it gets too old.

Q: What does it mean when a file is quarantined?

A: If your antivirus software detects a potentially harmful file when scanning and can't clean it, it will place it in quarantine so that it cannot interact with other files in your system. The program may not be able to clean the file because it has a new virus that it doesn't have a definition for yet, or you may not have updated your definitions for the program to recognize the new threat.

Infection Protection

Product Summary: INFECTION PROTECTION						
	eTrust EZ Antivirus 2005 6.2	F-Secure Internet Security 2005	McAfee VirusScan 2005 9.0	Norton AntiVirus 2005	PC-cillin Internet Security 2005	ZoneAlarm With Antivirus
EDITORS' RATING	7.5	7.8	7.7	7.7	8.3 	7.8
Scans Inbound/ Outbound E-Mail	Yes/no	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes
Firewall	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Antispyware Protection	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
COMPANY	Computer Associates	F-Secure	McAfee	Symantec	Trend Micro	Zone Labs
REQUIRES	64MB RAM (Windows NT), 128MB RAM (Windows 2000 and XP); Windows 95, 98, Me, NT, 2000, or XP	128MB RAM (Windows 98 and Me), 256MB RAM (Windows 2000 and XP); 300MB hard drive space; Windows 98, Me, 2000, or XP	Windows 98, Me, 2000, or XP	64MB RAM (Windows 98, Me, and 2000), 128MB RAM (Windows XP); 125MB hard drive space (Windows 2000 and XP); Windows 98, Me, 2000, or XP	64MB (Windows 98, Me, and 2000), 128MB (Windows XP); 100MB hard drive space; Windows 98, 98 SE, Me, 2000, or XP	64MB RAM (Windows 2000), 128MB RAM (Windows XP); Windows 98 SE, Me, 2000, or XP
DIRECT PRICE*	\$29.95	\$78	\$59.99 (boxed); \$49.99 (download); \$20 rebate available	\$49.95	\$49.95	\$24.95