



INFO SHEET N°14

Viruses & Antivirus

Protecting your phone and computer

Understanding digital threats and protecting yourself effectively — without panicking and without being scammed.

A computer virus is a malicious programme that can damage your device, steal your data or spy on your activities. The good news: with a few simple precautions, you can protect yourself effectively — often for free.

The 4 types of digital threats

Virus / Malware

A programme that installs itself without your knowledge and damages your device, slows everything down or deletes files.

Danger: ● ● ●

Phishing

A fake email or fake website that imitates your bank or an official service to steal your login details and passwords.

Danger: ● ● ●

Ransomware

Locks your device and encrypts your files — scammers demand a ransom to restore your access. Very dangerous.

Danger: ● ● ●

Adware / Spyware

Displays intrusive adverts or secretly monitors your activity — often installed via a dubious app.

Danger: ● ● ●



Signs that your device is infected



Suddenly very slow

Your phone or computer is sluggish for no apparent reason



Battery draining quickly

An active virus consumes a lot of energy in the background



Unknown apps

Apps appear that you did not install



Browser changed

Your homepage has changed or adverts appear everywhere



Emails sent without you

Your contacts receive strange emails from your address



Unexplained purchases

Unknown transactions appear on your bank statement



The best free antivirus programmes

Windows Defender

✓ Gratuit

Built into Windows 10/11. Excellent for PCs. Nothing to install.

Avast Free

✓ Gratuit

Very popular. PC and Android smartphone.

AVG Free

✓ Gratuit

Simple and effective. Good basic protection.

Malwarebytes

✓ Gratuit

Ideal for scanning and cleaning an infected device.

Bitdefender

~ Payant

Excellent level of protection. Limited free version.

Norton 360

~ Payant

Complete PC + smartphone protection. ~CHF 40/year.



On iPhone: Apple protects its system very well — an antivirus is generally not needed. **On Android (Samsung),** an antivirus is recommended. **On Windows PC,** the built-in Windows Defender is sufficient for basic use.



How to protect yourself — the 6 golden rules

Essential daily protection

1

Update your device regularly

Updates fix security vulnerabilities. Never ignore update notifications — they are essential.

2

Download only from official stores

Play Store (Android) or App Store (iPhone) — never from unknown sites. Official apps are verified.

3

Do not click on suspicious links

In emails, SMS or WhatsApp from unknown people — even if it looks official. If in doubt, go directly to the official website.

4

Use strong and unique passwords

A different password for each important service. Never use your date of birth or "123456".

5

Back up your data regularly

Photos, documents — back up to Google Photos, OneDrive or a USB stick. If infected, you will lose nothing.

6

Install an antivirus (Android and PC)

Windows Defender (PC) or Avast Free (Android) — free and effective. Run a full scan at least once a month.

The "fake antivirus" scam

Warning — very common among seniors!

You are browsing the internet and suddenly a flashing red alert message appears: "*YOUR DEVICE IS INFECTED! Call 0800 XXX XXX immediately*" or "*Your PC has a virus — download our software now!*"

It is always a scam! Here is how to react:

- ✓ Close the window or tab immediately
- ✓ NEVER call the number shown
- ✓ Do not download anything from this site
- ✓ NEVER give remote access to your computer
- ✓ If you clicked — switch off your device and call a loved one

A real antivirus never appears in your web browser with a phone number to call.

SeniorPhone tips

- On Windows PC, **Windows Defender is already installed** — enable it and it works automatically
- Run a **monthly scan** with your antivirus — it takes 10 minutes and can detect hidden threats
- Install **only one antivirus** — two together cause conflicts and slow down your device
- **Automatic updates** are your best friends — never disable them
- If in doubt, ask a loved one or your retailer — never use someone who contacts you spontaneously
- Back up your photos to **Google Photos** — if ransomware strikes, you will not lose your memories

Pitfalls to absolutely avoid

-  Never download an antivirus from an advert or email — always go to the manufacturer's official website
-  Very well-known "free antivirus" programmes on the internet can themselves be malware — stick to the brands listed in this sheet
-  Never pay to "fix a virus" to someone who contacted you spontaneously by phone
-  An alert message in your browser is NOT your antivirus — it is a scam

Key takeaways

- On Windows PC: Windows Defender is free and already built in — enable it.
- On Android (Samsung): install Avast Free or AVG Free from the Play Store.
- On iPhone: no antivirus needed — Apple protects its system well.
- Update your device regularly — it is the best protection.
- An alert message in your browser with a number to call = scam.

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Safety — Essential reminders

Never share your passwords or codes with anyone

Not by phone, not by email, not by SMS. Your bank, the police and operators will never ask for them.

Hidden number — do not answer

A hidden number deliberately conceals its identity. Hang up without hesitation.

Unknown number — avoid answering

Let it ring, wait for a voicemail, call back only if necessary. Never call back a 0900 number.

Fake police or fake banker — hang up and call 117

The real police and your bank will NEVER ask you to hand over money or your PIN by phone.

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