

Personal Computer Hygiene Part 1: Anti-Virus

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Protect your computer from viruses using these suggestions.

- Check to see your anti-virus software is installed and up-to-date.
- Update your anti-virus software if it isn't current
- Perform a manual scan of your hard disk.

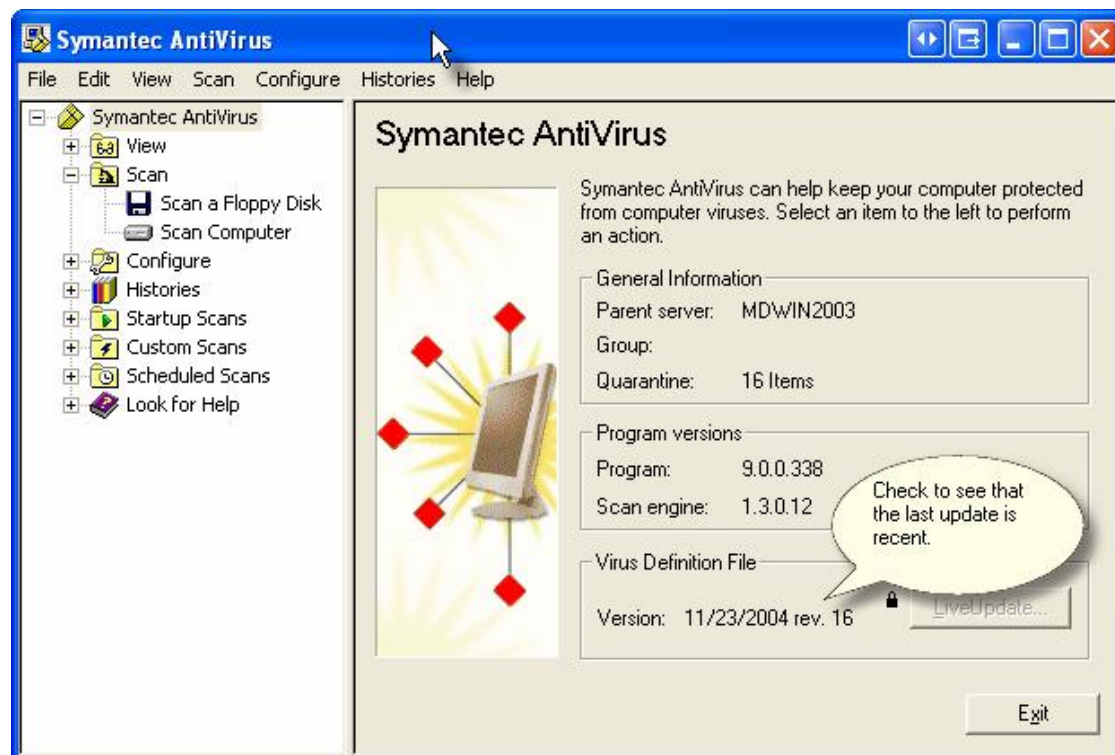
Checking your computer's virus checker

Virus scanning programs are available from several vendors. Some of the most familiar are the *Norton Anti-Virus* products available from [Symantec](http://www.symantec.com). These products consist of a program that runs on your computer and which scans all of computer files as they are opened, closed and created.

The program can be accessed in a couple of different ways:

1. under the Start | Program Files | Symantec Client Security
2. or by right clicking the Symantec icon in the task tray (lower right hand corner of your desktop)
3. Either, 1, or 2, but the program may be called Norton Antivirus, or something similar.

Once the program is started you'll see a screen similar to the following:

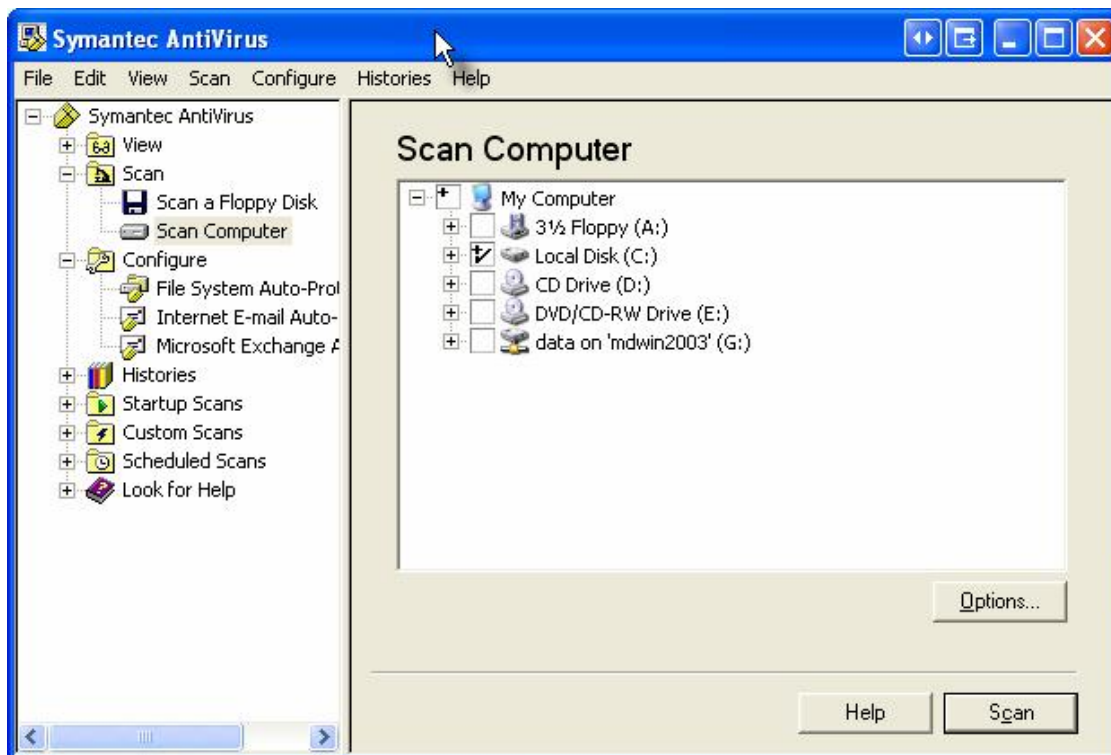


Note the version and date of the Virus Definition File. *This date should be recent.* The program is regularly updated on the internet each Wednesday. If the date is old, and the “LiveUpdate” button is available, then press the button and perform the update via your internet connection. If the LiveUpdate button is not available, then chances are that the program is being updated from your local network (in an office environment, for example)

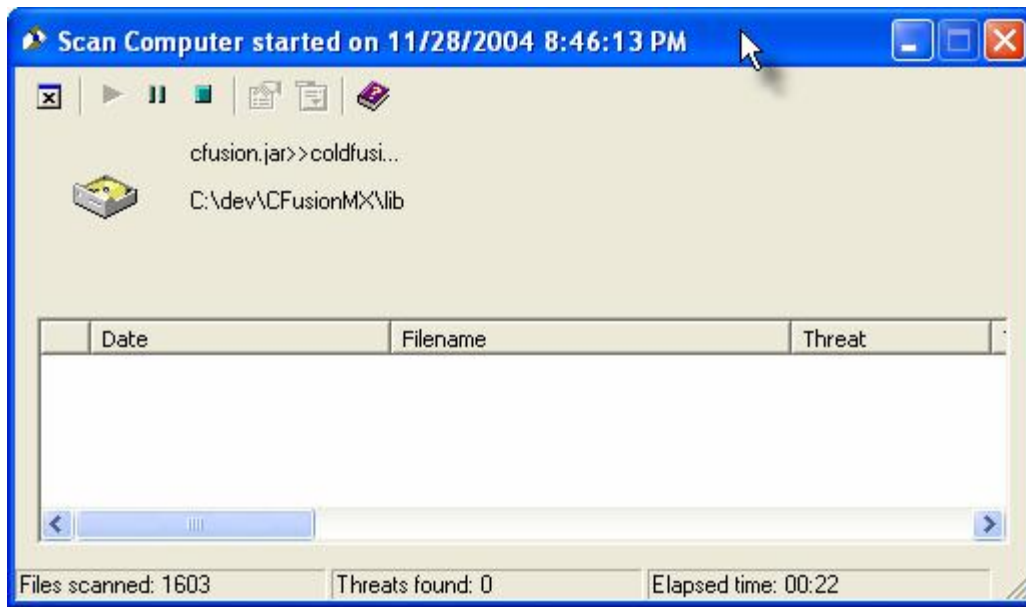
Performing a scan

OK, assuming you have a recent set of virus definitions you can perform a manual scan of your hard disk.

1. In the left hand column click on “Scan Computer”
2. In the right hand view, click the empty white square next to little disk icon that represents your drive C. This may say something other than “Local Disk”. After clicking you’ll see a *check mark and a plus sign* within the box.



Once the C: drive is chosen, you’ll be able to click on the “Scan” button on the lower right of the screen. This will close the current screen, and show an interactive screen that displays the files as they are being scanned.



The scanning process can take some time, depending on the number of files that you have stored on your hard disk, the speed of the computer, and other tasks that you may be performing. 20 – 40 minutes is not unusual. You can minimize the window while the scan is taking place and go on to other things.

Possible Scan Results

The scan may report that it found one or more files that have been “infected”. When this happens, the program attempts to “disinfect” the file. If this is successful, then the file stays in place, and all is well.

However, if the file cannot be disinfected, it is placed in “quarantine”. This removes the offending file, puts it in a place where it is no longer a threat, but does not delete the file physically from the disk. For practical purposes the file is no longer useable. Usually you can ignore these files.

In some cases you may see one, two, five or dozens of files that have been infected. This is less likely if the program updates are in place and are a good incentive for checking once in awhile.

Conclusion

Your office computer most likely has a virus program in place that is installed and maintained by your tech support people. You may be asked to perform the above procedures to verify that the virus checker is in place and working.

Be sure that you have a current anti-virus program installed at home too, and that it is up-to-date. Single copies of the Symantec/Norton programs cost from \$35.00 - \$50.00 and include a year’s subscription to the update database.