

According to statistics from TrendMicro, the past 24 hours has seen over 1.2 million virus infections in the US alone. Approximately 4 million computers in the United States are currently affected by the Win AntiVirus 2009 Vundo Virus variant. Another 1 million are affected by a Vundo variant far more sinister. With the release of the FileFix Professional attack the Vundo has gone from simple scareware to real life extortion. This version causes actual data loss and corruption of personal files. With the fake antivirus programs and now the data-captive extortionists, malware has become a pretty profitable, if illegal, business.

FileFix Pro finds your computer like most other infections through infected email attachments, poisoned web sites, and P2P file sharing programs (think illegal MP3s) among other venues. When it finds your computer it pops up any one of several official looking warnings to persuade the end user to invite it in. That's when things get really bad. FileFix seeks out all of your personal data, such as Word or Excel files, emails, PDF files and similar, and encrypts them. Encrypting them basically entails scrambling them, making them unusable, and then locking them down with a "key" holding them hostage. After sticking you between the proverbial rock and hard place, they pop up advertisements informing you of the infection and offering to sell you the "key" for around \$40.

How do you avoid this virus? The same basic virus rules apply here that apply in any virus situation. Caution and common sense applied with proper maintenance and updates. Beware of any email attachments that you aren't expecting. It might not be a bad idea to email your buddy just to make sure that the "Dog falls off couch – VERY FUNNY.mpg" file really did come from him before opening it. Avoid programs like LimeWire and Kazaa; downloading pirated music and movies isn't just illegal it is also one of the fastest ways to infect your computer with a virus. Regularly run programs like CCleaner or similar programs that clean up the temporary files and internet cache, those areas are a haven for virus and other malware programs. Most importantly, make sure you have the latest version of your anti-virus program installed and verify that it is downloading updates and scanning nightly. AVG and Avira both recently released major updates to deal with the onslaught of virus threats that have recently appeared. Finally, as I always stress: backup, backup, backup! If you are unsure of the status of your anti-virus or backup, please give us a call. After all, you know what they say about prevention...