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Internet Hazards

This factsheet provides an introduction to some of the potential hazards you need to be aware of when connected to the Internet. Don't be alarmed. The information here includes links to resources that advise how you can protect yourself from them.

You can get more detailed information from various sources including those below. Computer magazines often include features about computer security and your internet service provider should also be able to provide you with information on protecting your PC.

www.microsoft.com/athome/security/default.msp

Viruses, Worms and Trojan Horses

These are malicious programs that can cause damage to your computer and information on it and use your computer to spread themselves to your friends or family and the rest of the Web.

You can protect your computer against these threats by using anti-virus software. This is a program which runs in the background and keeps your computer safe – keep it up to date and don't switch it off!

<http://www.webopedia.com/DidYouKnow/Internet/2004/virus.asp>

Firewalls

A firewall prevents unauthorised access to your computer by other internet users when you are connected to the Internet.

www.microsoft.com/athome/security/viruses/fwbenefits.msp

Spam

Spam is a term for unsolicited or junk e-mail. There are actions you can take to reduce the quantity but it is unlikely that you will ever be able to eradicate it.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spam_\(electronic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spam_(electronic))

Scams

These are usually “get rich quick” schemes offering large sums of money.

If it seems too good to be true – it probably is!

<http://www.scambusters.org/>

Spyware

Spyware is software that collects personal information without your knowledge or permission. Software is available that protects your computer against spyware.

<http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/default.mspx//>

Phishing

Phishing is a type of deception intended to steal your identity by trying to get information like credit card numbers or bank account information from you.

<http://www.millersmiles.co.uk/identitytheft/phishing.html>

Diallers

This software reconfigures your computer to dial a premium rate number to connect you to the internet, or to dial other premium rate numbers. Some are designed to be downloaded and installed without your consent or knowledge. A firewall will protect you from software downloading without your knowledge. This doesn't apply to you if you have broadband.

http://www.getsafeonline.org/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=1164

Hoaxes

These are usually emails that contain bogus warnings intended to frighten or mislead people.

www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html

Protecting Children

The Internet is full of material that you will find inappropriate or offensive. There are many ways to control access to inappropriate material.

www.microsoft.com/athome/security/children/default.mspx

www.iwf.org.uk

www.besafeonline.org

www.childnet-int.org/

www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/TheInternet/InternetSafety/

* Messages charged at standard rate. You will receive two confirmation messages charged at £1.50 each. AbilityNet will receive your donation net of charges applied by mobile network operators and a processing fee. If you have any questions regarding this service, please call 020 7549 2222.