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Mac Trojan May Be Going Viral, But Is It Time To Panic?

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by [Kyle Buckley](#) (Senior Editor)

Published on May 20th, 2011 12:00 AM

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Earlier this month, computer security firm Intego [discovered](#) a new threat to Mac users known as MacDefender. The threat, or trojan, has several other variants known as MacProtector, MacSecurity, and the like. It appears that in most instances, the threat is auto-downloaded as users perform a web search with Google and clicks on one of the subsequent search results. Users may not know of the download until a window appears asking to install MacDefender or another antivirus program. Despite what the window says, it is not an antivirus program in any way.

If a user proceeds with the installation, the trojan will ask for an administrator's username and password. From there, the nasty app will ask the user for credit card information to use the "antivirus" service. Other variants of the trojan also saturate your screen with porn and ads for sexual supplements. It may also continually "inform" the user that their copy of MacDefender is unregistered and will prompt for credit card info. It is unknown if the trojan does anything else like steal passwords and other sensitive info.

If you are one of the unlucky people who have MacDefender or its derivatives on your Mac(s), [please click here to read instructions on how to get rid of it](#). After the trojan is eradicated, it probably wouldn't hurt to change all your passwords, since it is unknown how much information MacDefender gathers and sends back to its makers.

For the rest of you, ensure that **Open "safe" files after download** is unchecked in Safari preferences. It is also a good practice not to give any app the administrator's username and password unless you know full well what the app is and only if you have requested the installation or system change. In other words, when a window appears asking for an admin's username and password, let a bell go off in your head and ask yourself, "Did I ask for something to be installed or for a system change to occur?" If your answer is no, don't give the window the username and password.

Is the sky falling? Although some analysts and bloggers have said this is the end to Apple's claim that Macs are more secure than Windows PC's, I don't think it is. Like I've said, the only way the trojan can be installed on a Mac is if the user gives it permission to. The same cannot be said for Windows machines. Viruses and trojans on Windows machines can spread like wildfire. This particular Mac trojan does not spread in such a way. Even so, I do think this is a sign that Mac users need to be a bit more proactive in prevention of trojan installation. The Apple community has done a bit of a disservice by constantly

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proclaiming that Macs can't get viruses or trojans. Saying such things causes new Mac users to be less cautious while surfing. This is likely how this trojan is able to be installed because several users trust Mac OS X to tell them if anything is wrong.

Should you rush and buy antivirus software such as [Intego VirusBarrier](#)? It depends on how much you trust yourself. Thus far, Mac trojans can only be installed if the user gives it permission to be installed. If you trust your computer experience enough not to give unknown apps the admin's username and password, then no, there is no reason to rush and buy antivirus software. But if you feel a little less computer savvy and think you may accidentally type the admin's username and password in the app's installation window, then yes, purchasing antivirus like [Intego VirusBarrier](#) might be a good idea.

Tags: [mac os x](#), [security](#), [trojans](#), [viruses](#)

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[macelly](#) - May 20th, 2011, 01:38 AM



I'm tired of chicken littles freaking out about this trojan. I spent a bit of time helping my cousin get rid of it this last week. It's a rather bothersome trojan, but I'd much rather stick with the still very secure Mac platform. Viruses and trojans can popup all the time on Windows and also execute. They also spread like a venereal disease in the Windows community



[dksBeet](#) - May 20th, 2011, 10:50 AM



another thing that can prevent the installation of trojans and rogue apps is to not be logged in as administrator. It is a good idea to set your Mac's user account as a "Standard User" and create a new account as being the admin and rarely, if ever, log in as the admin user. This way, your username and account will not be able to install things or make major system changes. To install and make system changes, you will have to manually enter the admin's username and password. This can sometimes add a bit more seconds to your day, but the very minor inconvenience is worth the extra protection.



[Kyle Buckley](#) - May 20th, 2011, 11:01 AM



From [dksBeet](#)

another thing that can prevent the installation of trojans and rogue apps is to not be logged in as administrator. It is a good idea to set your Mac's user account as being the admin and rarely, if ever, log in as the admin user. This way, your username and account will not be able to install things or make major system changes. To install and make system changes, you will have to manually enter the admin's username and password. This can sometimes add a bit more seconds to your day, but the very minor inconvenience is worth the extra protection.

Thanks, this is also a very effective way to prevent malicious software from being put onto your Mac. A few months ago, I added a separate account to be the admin and changed my user account to be a standard user.

[Mr. X](#) - May 20th, 2011, 11:38 AM



Triều Phát Computer

Started By: [neverlove93](#)

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Last Post By: [neverlove93](#) December 29th, 2014, 02:01 AM



2. Thay màn hình cảm ứng sky a850 tại 130 thái hà

Started By: [tuanddn1](#)

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Last Post By: [gia lan](#) December 26th, 2014, 01:55 PM



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Started By: [nguyen hoa](#)

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Last Post By: [gia lan](#) December 23rd, 2014, 02:44 AM



Học Tiếng Anh tại Boston English

Started By: [gia lan](#)

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Last Post By: [gia lan](#) December 22nd, 2014, 02:34 PM





Like I've ben telling people for years, Macs suck.



[Captain Hindsight](#) - May 20th, 2011, 11:47 AM



Apple should have released a security patch to prevent this trojan from being installed.



[jopper27](#) - May 20th, 2011, 12:27 PM



From [Captain Hindsight](#)

Apple should have released a security patch to prevent this trojan from being installed.

LOL. God bless you Captain Hindsight! 😊

I'm getting sick of my uneducated Windows friends harassing me for the past few days about this trojan as if it means that Macs are no longer secure. Drives me nuts. Yes, it's a bad trojan, but it is nothing like those found for Windows which can be installed and spread without the user needing to give the trojan or virus permission to do so. Like it has been said, the only way this MacDefender or whatever can gain access to your Mac is if you enter the admin password when it asks for it.

The other thing is, most people, even if they accidentally install it, probably don't give the app their credit card info. So really, this trojan just pesters the user with porn pics and boxes that repeatedly appear asking for credit card numbers. The Windows world has thousands upon thousands of trojans like this. The Mac world has much much less, probably only a handful.



[ravy](#) - May 20th, 2011, 05:38 PM



From [LB Ped](#)

Yep. And what does it say about these apple fanboys who, even after there is a threat to their Macs, still use the Mac computer? Morons.

"Macs are the best because they can't get viruses. Oh, wait, I guess they can get viruses. But Macs are still the best anyways."

Frickin idiots. Now that the world knows Macs aren't secure, Mac fans really don't have a leg to stand on.

Yeah, it's not like Windows PC's have 100,000 x more trojans and viruses then the Mac platform. Oh, wait . . .



[cluttered_desk](#) - May 20th, 2011, 08:19 PM



From [LB Ped](#)

Yep. And what does it say about these apple fanboys who, even after there is a threat to their Macs, still use the Mac computer? Morons.

"Macs are the best because they can't get viruses. Oh, wait, I guess they can get viruses. But Macs are still the best anyways."

Frickin idiots. Now that the world knows Macs aren't secure, Mac fans really don't have a leg to stand on.

So if Mac users that still like Mac even now that there is ONE known almost-problem are morons, what does that make Windows users that still cling to Windows even with their thousands of viruses? Your words, not mine.

Just curious though, if you're so damn smart, what operating system do you have? Looks to me like your options are Mac (moron), Windows (way worse than moron), or . . . Linux?

All times are GMT -4. The time now is 09:01 PM.

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