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Ways to find out if your smartphone has malware

Sep 18, 2021, 5:45 AM

(Pexels Photo)

(Pexels Photo)

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BY [KEN COLBURN, DATA DOCTORS](#)

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Q: Is there a way to tell if my smartphone has a virus?

A: With nearly 4 billion smartphone users around the world, our mobile devices are a huge target these days.

Technically speaking, a virus spreads by attaching itself to a file or program and is activated when the infected file is opened with the ability to copy itself or attach to other files.

To date, we've not seen this type of traditional virus in either of the major smartphone ecosystems; however, there are still malicious threats that are very serious.



Malware threats

Malicious software (aka malware) or in the case of smartphones, malicious apps, are the biggest threat to both iOS and Android devices.

If you stick to getting your apps from the associated app stores, you'll dramatically reduce the chances of downloading a malicious app, but it's still possible.

There have been many situations where apps that were approved by the official stores were later discovered to have malware in them.

The [Joker malware](#) has been figuring out ways to evade the Google Play Store's scanners for years, including a recent removal of 24 apps that were found to have the malware hiding in them.

[Apple's App Store](#) has also experienced a similar situation in the past.

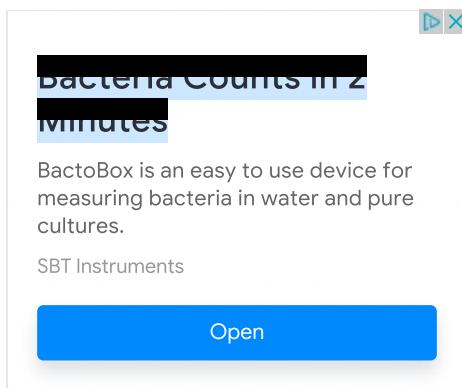
Needless to say, if you have any of these apps on your smartphone, you should remove them immediately.

Missing security updates

The operating system for your mobile devices is under constant scrutiny by security experts and hackers to find vulnerabilities that can be exploited.

This is why there tend to be lots of ongoing updates for both iOS and Android users – skipping these security updates put you in a more vulnerable position.

Unpatched vulnerabilities could allow hackers to exploit your smartphone by simply getting you to click on a link that leads to a malicious website.



Signs of malware infection

Some of the signs of an infection can be subtle, such as batteries draining a bit faster or slightly higher data usage as well as slightly slower performance.

Malicious apps that are running in the background can also cause overheating of your device.

Other signs that are more obvious include constant pop-up ads, apps you don't recognize, or unexplained additional charges on your phone bill.

Malware scanners

Google has a basic app scanner they call Play Protect that's built into the Google Play app.

It's designed to automatically scan your apps, but you can manually scan whenever you'd like by tapping on your profile in the upper-right corner, then on Play Protect in the menu.

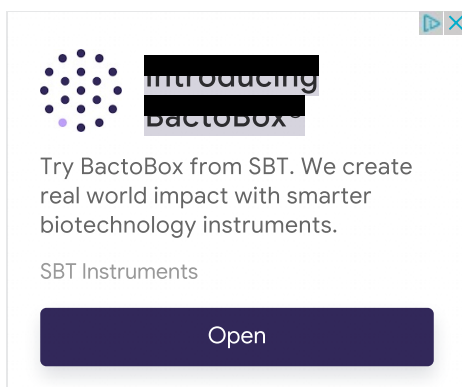
There are numerous options for downloading malware scanners that proactively protect you once they are installed.

Many of them include lots of other security features, ranging from VPNs to phishing site detection to privacy managers as well.

Android users can find 10 free scanners [here](#) and iPhone users can find five free scanners [here](#).

The nuclear option

If you're concerned that something malicious is going on with your smartphone, the ultimate tactic to ensure that everything gets removed is to completely reset your device.



This will wipe everything from your smartphone, so it's critical to make sure you have a complete backup before proceeding.

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