

Software Updates and Security Issues

There are reports of security problems with smart phones and computers every day in the news. Most of these problems are fixed by updates to the software that has the problem. There are some security problems that will not be fixed by waiting for an update. This announcement addresses both.

National Security Risk

There is a software application that the Federal Communications Commission has declared to be an “[unacceptable national security risk](#)” because of its extensive harvesting of user data: TikTok. In addition, a security researcher recently determined that [TikTok deploys software capable of logging all key strokes](#) including user names and passwords. There is no evidence that TikTok is capturing key strokes but the existence of the capability is concerning. If a family member is using TikTok, we encourage you to forward this email to them.

Security Risk

You may know by now that every software application could be hacked and many have been. A single hack followed by a thorough and transparent announcement describing the hack tends to ensure users that the software vendor will do better in the future. However, [when a software vendor suffers multiple hacks](#), thorough and transparent announcements are no longer sufficient. Therefore, if you are currently using the LastPass password manager, you should switch to a different password manager. [Bitwarden](#) is recommended.

Keeping Software Up to Date

You can ensure that the software on your smart phones and computers is up to date by following these steps:

Windows

- Updates to Windows are always enabled unless you explicitly disabled them. Windows will prompt you to restart your computer to install the update. Microsoft typically releases updates on Tuesdays although critical updates may be issued at any time.

- There is no easy and complete solution for updating software applications on Windows.

The [PatchMyPC](#) software app will automatically check the update status of over 300 software applications on computers using Windows and install those updates. It is free. You may run PatchMyPC manually or [select a schedule to run automatically](#).

Although some software applications on Windows will automatically check for updates and notify you that an update is available, most software applications will not.

- The Firefox browser will automatically update when you close and then re-open Firefox. To manually verify that Firefox is up to date, click on the three stacked lines in the upper right-hand corner of the window, click on Help, and then click on About Firefox. If an update is available, click on the box to Restart to Update Firefox.
- To verify the Chrome browser is up to date, click on the three stacked dots in the upper right-hand corner of the window, click on Settings, and click on About Chrome at the bottom left of the Settings window. Chrome will either update then or state that Chrome is up to date.
- To verify the Brave browser is up to date, click on the three stacked lines in the upper right-hand corner of the window and then click on About Brave. Brave will automatically update if an update is available.

For the applications that do not automatically notify you that an update is available, you will need to open the application and then:

- Select Help on the menu bar
- Select Check for Updates

Do not forget to verify that your antivirus software is up to date. If you use Ccleaner, verify that it is also up to date.

It is good practice to check for updates weekly.

iPhones and iPads

- iPhones and iPads will automatically check for iOS updates, if enabled.
 - Go to *Settings*
 - Scroll down to *General* and select.
 - Select Software Update
 - Ensure that Automatic Updates are On

Apple does not install automatic updates immediately. If you see that an update is available, you may install it manually. Otherwise, Apple will automatically update your phone 1 to 4 weeks later as they determine there no problems in the update.

- Software applications on iPhones and iPads are automatically updated through the App Store. To ensure that you automatically receive those updates, go to Settings on your iPhone, select App Store, and then ensure that App Updates are turned On.

For additional information, see this [Apple support article](#).

Android

- Android users are notified when updates to Android are available. To update:
 - Open *Settings*
 - Tap *System* and then tap *System Update*
 - Follow instructions on the screen
- To check if updates are available:
 - Open *Settings*
 - Tap Security
 - To check for a security update, tap *Google Security checkup*
 - To check for a Google Play system update, tap *Google Play system update*

macOS

To keep your Mac up to date, [follow the instructions at macOS User Guide](#). You'll need to select the version of macOS that you are using to obtain the appropriate instructions.

Linux

To keep your Linux distribution up to date, follow the instructions for the package manager that your distribution uses. For stable distributions such as Debian Stable and Ubuntu LTS, it is suggested that you check for updates weekly. For distributions that emphasize frequent updates, such as Debian Testing and Kali Linux, it is suggested that you check for updates daily.