

## Antivirus: Why Buy When It's Free?

“The best free antivirus programs around.”

by Pete Choppin

I'm so tired of paying high prices for antivirus software. OK, I don't actually pay for my software. And no, Digital Dave, I don't pirate it either. There's no need to pirate antivirus software. For home users, the free stuff is perfectly good.

I think of antivirus software like I think of insurance: an absolutely necessary evil from which you will rarely see a return on investment. But note I said absolutely necessary, because just like your insurance policy, antivirus software *may* protect you from that one devastating disaster.

I used to run my systems with no antivirus software at all. And, rightfully so, I received criticism about not installing antivirus protection. My naïve argument was, of course, all about smart browsing. "Just be careful and you'll be fine" was my rationale. But for the most part, it's true ... until you realize your computer has lost its data, that totally cool desktop wallpaper, as well as its marbles. And right about when you're well into the Windows Setup program rebuilding your system, you find yourself saying, "Why didn't I just install antivirus software?"

So my argument isn't whether to get antivirus software, but whether you should pay for it.

In no particular order, here are the best free antivirus programs I've found. Take a look at all the features; see if you like the interface and functionality, kick the tires—but do yourself a favor and install one of these.

### [Panda Cloud Antivirus](#)

Have you heard of cloud computing? Check out Panda Cloud Antivirus. It's free and uses cloud computing technology to protect against the newest malware variants without impacting PC performance. Meanwhile, Panda Cloud Antivirus works well with other desktop antivirus software simultaneously to provide multitier security protection for your computer.

With the cloud-based scanning from [PandaLabs](#) servers, they've got the virus scanning time to six minutes, thus becoming the lightest and fastest antivirus service. It supports Windows 7, Vista and XP (32-bit) operating systems. The latest Panda Cloud Antivirus version is 1.0.

### [Immunet Protect](#)

Immunet Protect is another free cloud-based antivirus program that takes advantage not only of cloud computing but community-based protection, collective wisdom and malware protection on your computer.

Immunet Protect consumes a very small amount of computer resources while running, and it can run on Microsoft Windows XP (SP2 or later), Vista and Windows 7 (RC 32-bit only).

### [AVG 9 Antivirus Free Edition](#)

AVG 9 Antivirus software is a significant improvement from its predecessors in speed and levels of security protection. It features an antivirus module, spyware module, basic anti-rootkit protection, e-mail and phishing protection, as well as the AVG Link scanner to provide safety ratings for Web sites.

AVG Antivirus 9 free edition's download size is around 70MB. It's a lightweight, low-impact package, yet comes with tons of features.

### [FortiClient EndPoint Security Suite](#)

FortiClient Endpoint Security software provides an SSL/IPSec VPN, WAN optimization client, anti-virus and anti-spyware, anti rootkit protection, execution behavioral analysis, firewall and intrusion prevention.

FortiClient Endpoint Security free edition also provides automatic updates from the FortiGuard subscription service to ensure protection against the latest threats.

### [Comodo Internet Security—Free Windows Internet Security Suite](#)

Comodo Internet Security comes with Comodo AntiVirus and Comodo Firewall to eliminate all known viruses, worms and Trojans from desktops and networks with no license fees or hidden costs. The free Windows Internet Security is free for life.

Comodo Internet Security 3.13 (paid) includes many new features and services, including Comodo Secure DNS, Comodo HopSurf and the ability to specify alternative URLs for program and virus updates.

### [Avira Antivir 9 Free Edition](#)

Avira Antivir 9 doesn't appear to have changed much compared to the previous free edition. The most important changes on Avira are: locked file scanning (scans files in use), faster

scanning for multicore processors, much improved disinfection and, most importantly, the added adware/spyware detection in the *free* version.

It still remains a good free antivirus program to use for protecting your Windows system.

### [BitDefender 10 Antivirus Free Edition](#)

BitDefender 10 antivirus free edition is equipped with latest BitDefender antivirus engine. The best part of this free antivirus is the ICISA Labs-certified scanning engines found in other BitDefender products, which allow you to enjoy basic virus protection for no cost at all.

However, BitDefender Free Edition is an on-demand virus scanner, which is best used in a system-recovery or forensics role.

### [Avast 5 Free Antivirus](#)

The biggest changes in Avast 5 free antivirus are the new user interface plus improvements on the antivirus scanning engine, performance and memory, and disk and CPU usage.

This free antivirus comes fully load with security system-protection features for your computer. The most impressive security feature is the multithreaded scanning optimization, which allows the splitting of large individual files between cores, accelerating the scanning process.

Just like insurance, antivirus software protects both you and other computers with which you come in contact. And there are several free options out there. I just hope the government doesn't end up mandating it like car insurance.

Let me know what *your* favorite antivirus software is.