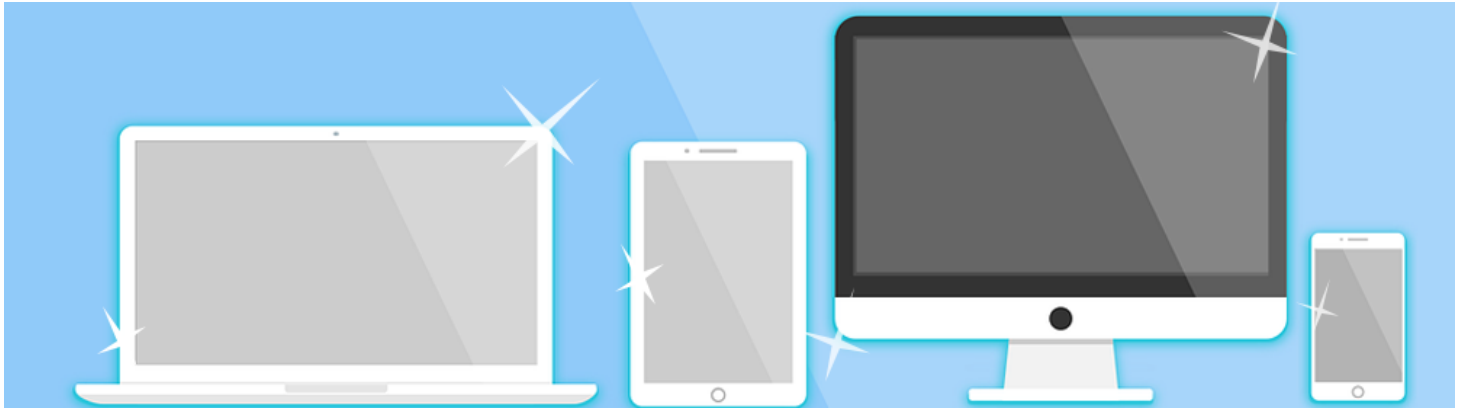# NEWSLETTER

How To Keep Your Tech Squeaky Clean

Our tech is something we use every day, but did you know it's also the most disgusting? Your screen may look clean, but studies show that a mobile phone can be 18x dirtier than a public restroom – ew! It gets worse (sorry)…that keyboard you tap at while eating your morning toast? It's probably the biggest bacterial threat in your house, with about 20 000 times more germs than a toilet seat, more if you share it with children.

It's not just sickness we're up against, because as dust builds up inside gadgets, they also slow down, malfunction or overheat. Your device essentially chokes on ick, as vents and filters are clogged by sucking in pet hair and floating debris.

Here's how to clean your essential tech items without damaging them:

1. Skip the household cleaners: Most cleaning products are too harsh for our technology and can end up causing permanent damage. You want something that can kill germs and remove everyday grime, without scratching or leaving behind a scented residue. Your best bet is Isopropyl Alcohol. You'll find it in the first aid section of supermarkets and pharmacies, or at the hardware store.

2. Power down completely: Turn your tech off all the way, not just sleeping, and unplug from any power sources. Switch wireless keyboards, mice, etc off underneath or remove the batteries.

3. Remove any cases or covers: Undress your device as much as you can, but leave screen protectors on (unless there's grime underneath). If your screen protector needs replacing, have a new one ready to apply.

4. Grab a microfiber cloth: Dampen the cloth with Isopropyl Alcohol and wipe screens and external surfaces gently. Older build-up may require extra effort.

5. Go deep: You can use a toothbrush or cotton tip to clean between most crevices, but some areas will need a bit more 'oomph' to clear. You've probably seen people use vacuum cleaners on their keyboard, but these are often TOO powerful and may suck keys or internal parts loose. They also generate damaging static electricity. Another option is to use a tech-specific vacuum, but these are usually underpowered.

Insider tip: Use a can of compressed air to blow the dust out. You can get these from many stores and they come with a long nozzle so you can really get in and direct the pressure. You'll be surprised what flies out, so it's best to do this outside! We don't recommend using compressed air on your computer's internal fans though, as this can make them spin too fast and damage them.

How often you clean your tech is up to you and your lifestyle. But it's a good idea to blow out computer internal dust at least twice a year and wiping your tech down 1-2 times per week will definitely reduce germs and grime.

Why Your Windows Updates Are More Important Than Ever

Stories about hackers and virus attacks seem to be making the news almost every day, and many of these news stories include tips on how you can avoid becoming a victim. One common theme among these tips is making sure your Windows operating system up to date.

Every day hackers are trying to figure out new ways to break into Microsoft Windows and once they do find a weakness, they try and find a way to spread it. This could be through a malicious email attachment or even something that spreads without your involvement.

Updates Explained

Whenever Microsoft discovers a potential flaw, they push out a small piece of software to all Windows computers running a supported version. If set correctly, your computer will check if there's any updates or patches and install them automatically. In new versions, this usually happens when you're shutting down or starting up, and doesn't impact your experience at all. Unfortunately, some users will manually disable or delay their updates, creating a risky situation.
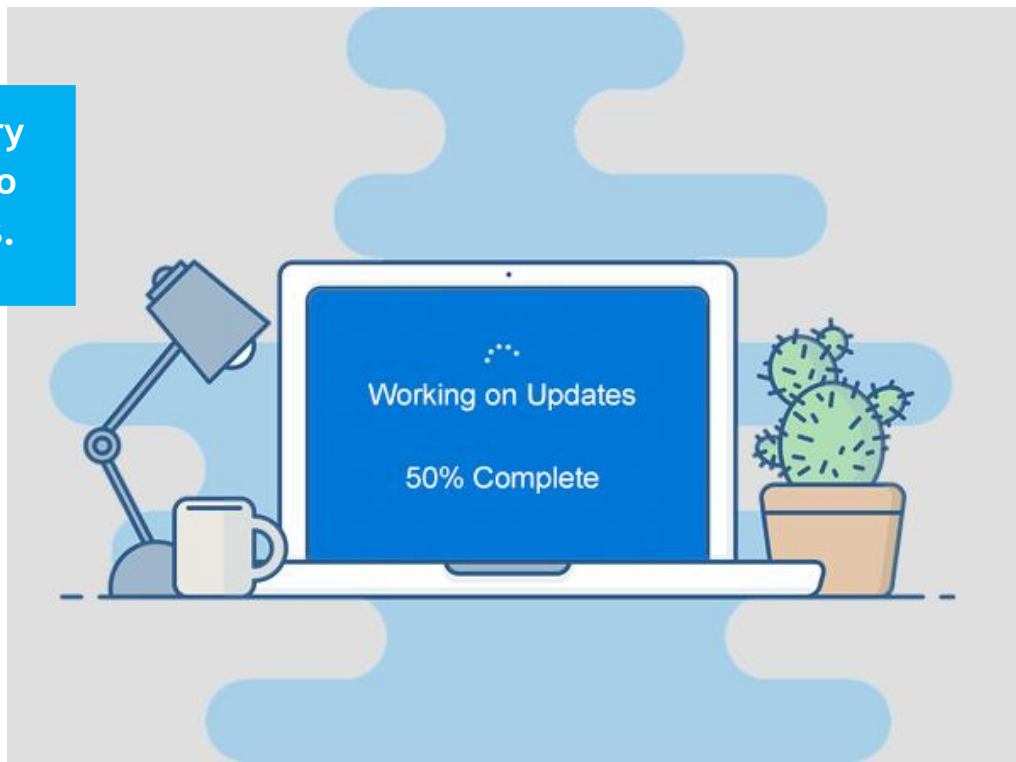
The update may include security patches, drivers or a simple tweak to address bugs or issues with Windows. Sometimes, they even include new features or applications to improve the stability of your operating system. They're a good thing!

Not All Versions Get Updates

Some older operating systems are no longer supported, which means unless there are extenuating circumstances, Microsoft won't issue any new updates. Not a single one – generally, if cyber criminals discover a flaw after support ends, they're free to exploit it. For example, Windows XP support ended in 2014, and Windows Vista just ended in April this year. The moment an operating system is retired it becomes a playground for cyber-criminals.

It's not just Microsoft walking away from these old versions either. Third party software like the Google Chrome browser will still work, but they've also stopped supporting old versions with crucial updates and patches. It might seem like everything is working fine because your anti-virus isn't pinging in alarm, but it just becomes a case of risk, upon risk, upon risk.

What to do with older Windows

As much as you're comfortable with your older version of Windows, each time you boot up you're exposing your system, important files and entire network. It only takes one weak entry point in the chain to allow malware into all connected devices. That could mean your photo storage, media center or even smart appliances. It's not worth it - if you're running Windows XP or Vista (or older), you need to update to a more modern operating system ASAP. Give us a call to upgrade your computer.

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We can also monitor your system remotely and apply your Windows updates with our Managed Services packages, ensuring you are always up to date and protected. Give us a call at 0113 2579992.