

# Moms Internet Guide

brought to you by Health Expressions®

## Stay Safe While You Surf and Shop

Hi, I'm Sarah. Welcome to Moms Internet Guide—the place to find straightforward answers to all your questions about the Web. Whether I'm trying to balance my checkbook or find a birthday present, the Internet always seems to make my life more convenient. It's quick and easy to check the weather online or send a short note by email. But sometimes I worry about whether it's really safe to do all this stuff online. There are so many stories about viruses and identity theft that I wonder if I'm putting myself at risk. A few months ago, I decided to stop fretting and start reading up on Internet security. It didn't take long for me to realize that you don't need to be a computer genius to protect yourself online. In fact, there are some pretty easy ways to safeguard your computer—and your personal information.

Since you lock your home's doors and windows at night, it only makes sense to secure your computer against unwanted intruders in the same way. Luckily, you only need three basic things to protect your PC: a firewall, antivirus software, and anti-spyware software.

First, you need to make sure your computer has a firewall. It's a piece of software that keeps hackers from accessing your computer. If you have a recent version of Windows®, your computer probably already has one. You just need to make sure it's turned on.

Simply go to your computer's control panel and click on the Windows firewall icon to check the setting. If your PC doesn't have a firewall, you can purchase this software online or at an electronics store.

Next, you'll want to invest in antivirus software. It helps keep your computer working right—just like vaccinations protect your kids against illness. Popular brands include McAfee® and Norton, and most automatically update their virus definitions each day. You can purchase downloads of the software online or buy CDs at your local electronics store. Getting your hands on anti-spyware software works the same way—it just protects you against identity theft rather than viruses. Sometimes these two products are sold together in one package.

Now that you've made your computer more secure, it's time to talk about online shopping habits. I love to find bargains on the Internet, but I don't want my credit card number or other personal details to fall into the wrong hands. To protect myself, I only buy from established stores with names that I know. I also check to make sure each site lists a real-world address and phone number in case there's a problem. If you're unsure about an online store, type the name into Google and look for customer reviews. You also want to make sure a webpage is secure before you enter your credit card number. A secure page keeps other people from seeing the information you enter.

# Moms Internet Guide

brought to you by Health Expressions®

How can you tell if a page is secure? Look at your browser's address line. Secure sites start with https instead of just http. Sometimes there's also a padlock symbol at the end of the address—another sign that it's safe.

Last but not least, never give out your personal information over email. It's not secure, and it isn't how legitimate businesses request information. Sometimes, people try to break into your accounts by sending emails that look like they're from someone else (for example, your bank or credit card company). Never respond to these emails, click on the links, or use phone numbers listed. If you're concerned, you should contact the company, using the phone number on your monthly statement.

Using these tips and tricks has made me feel more secure whenever I turn on my computer—I hope they give you the same confidence online.