

# PC Computer Maintenance

By Edward Zeidan



Edward Zeidan is the president of Nerd4Rent, Inc., a Lafayette-based technical support company that offers computer maintenance plans starting at only \$5.99 per month, remote support, help desk and training classes. Nerd4Rent can be reached at 925-283-5666 or [www.Nerd4Rent.com](http://www.Nerd4Rent.com).



Every computer needs periodic maintenance in order to perform at its best, and to keep running without problems. The vast majority of people-well over 90% in my experience-do not perform routine maintenance on their computers. Consequently, they

experience many avoidable problems with their computers. This article describes what steps you need to take to maintain your computer, and provides some practical computer usage tips.



## Update your antivirus/antispayware software

This is critical! Your computers' security suite updates daily, sometimes more frequently. Don't allow it to get out of date, or let your subscription expire. Since there are something like 16 viruses released every day, not having

up-to-date protection can be as bad as having no protection. Most of the time, you can just right-click on the icon in the lower-right part of your screen, and click "update" or "check for updates". Our favorites are AVG, Bit-Defender, and TrendMicro.



## Make sure your firewall is working

A firewall is designed to protect your computer from certain Internet threats. You need a firewall in additions to antivirus/antispayware software. If you have a home

network, your router is probably acting as a firewall. If not, make sure Windows or your security software is providing a firewall.



## Backup your data!

I know I sound like a broken record on this issue, but we're constantly seeing clients who lose irreplaceable pictures, documents, etc. and are in a panic. This would not be an issue if they had current backups.

You can use a thumbdrive, external hard drive or online backup service. For online backup services, we like idrive or carbonite.



## Change passwords frequently

Many people store highly sensitive information on their computer, such as online banking and investment passwords, income tax returns, business

information, etc. With identity theft increasing rapidly, it's important to change your computer and online passwords periodically. We recommend at least once per year.

## Keep all your program CDs & passwords handy

You need ready access to your program CDs in case there's a problem with your computer, or an upgrade is required. A large Ziplock bag or a small box makes a handy storage container for your CDs. Keep your software license codes with the CDs. Passwords for your

email, router, wireless network, etc. are frequently needed when troubleshooting computer problems or making changes to your system. We have created a password list document that is available for download on our website at [www.Nerd4Rent.com](http://www.Nerd4Rent.com) under the freestuff link.



## Stay away from file-sharing and other questionable websites

Websites that offer free music and video downloads often install programs on your computer that will make

it run worse, or could give you a virus. Many websites that offer some sort of free product or service make money by selling your personal information, or by installing rogue programs on your computer. Approach with caution.



## Watch what files/programs you download or open

When you receive an email with either a link to a website, or an attached file, use extra caution. Clicking a link or opening an attachment can install malicious software or a virus. Just because an email comes from a friend or

family member, do not automatically trust it. There are many viruses that will send themselves to everyone in your address book. A frequent ruse is to have people click a link in an email to see a joke. Once you click that link, you could get an infection.



## Defragment your hard drive

Your computer's hard drive is like a great big filing cabinet. As you create or edit files, your computer may store the file in several pieces. This causes your computer to slow down over time, as the pieces must be reassembled every time you want

to open the file. When you de-fragment your hard drive, the computer finds the pieces and reassembles them into one file. As a bonus, it even moves all files to the front of the hard drive, where they can be accessed more quickly. Disk defragmenter can be found under **All Programs | Accessories | System Tools**.



## Run Disk Cleanup

Disk Cleanup is a little utility that empties your recycle bin, clears out temporary files, and a few other niceties.

Run this utility at least monthly to clear out unneeded files. Disk Cleanup can be found under **All Programs | Accessories | System Tools**.



## Blow out the dust

Your computer is a dust magnet. Dust gets pulled into your computer's case and into the ventilation holes by the cooling fans. When dust builds up on internal components and covers ventilation holes, cooling air cannot flow over the

components and they heat up. Heat is the enemy of your computer. It's a good idea to vacuum or blow the dust out of the ventilation holes and the inside of your computer periodically. A note of caution: be careful if you open your computer's case. You can get a nasty shock or you can damage sensitive electronics inside.



## Run Microsoft Update/Windows Update

Microsoft is constantly updating Windows and Office to enhance performance and fix bugs and security issues. Make sure your computer has Microsoft Update and that it's set to automatically download critical updates.



## Check your hard drive space

You always want to maintain at least 15-20% free hard drive space. Your hard drive needs the free space for temporary storage space, while it figures out where to put your 500 page autobiography. Move little-used files to an external hard drive, or archive to CDs/DVDs.



## My computer suddenly stopped working, what should I do?

Windows XP comes with a great utility called System Restore that periodically takes a snapshot of your computer's settings. If you experience a problem, you can always try System Restore to see if that fixes the problem. When you run System Restore, any new software or hardware that you've

added since the system restore date will be lost. You will not lose your data files, they are unaffected by System Restore. A note of caution-some manufacturers have similarly named programs, which may cause you to lose all your data and programs. Make sure you know which System Restore you are using. System Restore is found under **All Programs | Accessories | System Tools**.



## Repair vs. replace

When does it make sense to replace your computer, rather than repairing it? Since computer prices have dropped so much over the past few years, we recommend that if your computer is over 3 years old, consider replacing it rather than performing repairs that

cost more than \$200-300. If the computer is more than 5 years old, then you should replace it when it needs service. You may be surprised to find you can purchase an excellent new computer for between \$400-700.



## Windows XP vs. Windows Vista

Last year, Microsoft released Windows Vista, their latest operating system. Unfortunately, Vista has been plagued by hardware and software incompatibilities, slowness, and instability. We strongly recommend that you purchase Windows XP with your new computer. Please note that you can only

find Windows XP online. Dell sells computers with XP on the business side of its website. If you're thinking of buying a new computer soon, be aware that Windows XP is supposed to be unavailable after June 30 (this deadline has already been extended once, and may be extended again).

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## Dinnertime and DNA

By Theresa Tsingis, D.C., M.S.

We've heard the saying "You are what you eat". Scientists are now discovering that your DNA unwinds and expresses itself according to what you eat also. The Genome Project, which has decoded human DNA, and the field of epigenetics (the science of what influences DNA), reveal that eating patterns may determine the health of not only yourself, but of future generations.

Nutrition is a lifestyle decision, but the genes that have been passed down to us may seem like an unalterable inheritance. Yet nutrigenomics (the study of nutrition and DNA) is showing that nutrients surrounding a cell's nucleus can influence which part of a gene unwinds. If the nutrient is compatible with health, optimal parts of the code can unwind to reproduce. If the nutrient is harmful, it may cause an expression of the genetic code that allows a familial-inherited disease to express itself. For example, if several men in a family have had heart attacks in their mid-forties, an active, positive lifestyle can be what spares some from that fate.

Genomic testing, if used responsibly and discriminately, can provide very interesting clues to how family patterns of disease are passed from one generation to another. Take high blood pressure, for instance. Several genetic tests can check for the presence of DNA alterations which may predispose (not absolutely predetermine) someone to hypertension. One can run those tests with a goal of making specific changes to avoid getting hypertension or prolong its manifestation. This knowledge can help in the employment of therapies which have a better chance of working. For example, a 47 year old female patient of ours with a history of hypertension on her mother's side, tested positive for an enzyme defect which can lead to a decreased ability to lower blood pressure. The good news is that her positive lifestyle steps can help her avoid going down that road. Another unexpected benefit was that in knowing a bit of her daughter's genetic code, her mother changed her medication to one that addressed that enzyme defect, and

more effectively lowered her blood pressure.

Another patient of ours, a 52 year old woman with a strong history of osteoporosis, had a simple genomics test done that revealed she was deficient in Vitamin D and calcitonin receptors. Vitamin D promotes calcium deposition into bone. Calcitonin is a hormone that signals calcium to enter the bone. The good news about this information is that she became informed enough to compensate for the genetic deficiency by taking more vitamin D supplements and D-rich foods. Also, there are calcitonin nasal sprays available to assist in raising available calcitonin levels. Her genetic inheritance is not a doomsday sentence. Along with appropriate medications to influence bone deposition, she's improving her chance of staving off osteoporosis.

There are thousands of genomic test results one could attain, and many new facilities that conduct these tests, but only about a dozen or two results are backed by research and shown to be alterable by lifestyle changes. At Lamorinda Nutrition, we only test for genomics factors that can be improved by diet and lifestyle.

In the next article, we will describe how nutrition, as a big part of lifestyle, can influence future generations by affecting our amazing genetic code.

*(Nutrients can cause a cascade of cell signals which )  
(This suggests that even with a strong family history of disease, one can positively alter that inheritance.)*



Dr. Theresa Tsingis, D.C., M.S., practices at Lamorinda Nutrition, 89 Davis Road, Orinda. She can be reached at [drtsingis@comcast.net](mailto:drtsingis@comcast.net) or (925) 360-2729.

## Healthy Eating On the Go Living Lean Works Out Business Partnerships ... continued from page 13

Lakhotia does not take commission on the Living Lean menu items.

Gepetto in Orinda is just starting to offer Living Lean sandwiches and salads as well. Sue, from Gepetto details her menu, "the sandwiches are made with high fiber bread (Milton's), oven roasted turkey breast, mustard, lettuce, tomato, red onion. The salad is composed of Spring mix, chicken breast, tomatoes, mushrooms, red bell peppers, red onion, cucumber. The dressing made of 2 tablespoons of olive

oil mixed with balsamic vinegar is on the side, and it is served with Milton's bread."

Diablo Foods in Lafayette is interested in joining this business alliance. The staff will be working on recipes with Lakhotia in the coming weeks. "My next step will be restaurants," says the young businesswoman, "there are many places where you can eat high protein, quality meals in our cities."

Lakhotia's brochures can be found in all the stores of her "partners."



PAPYRUS



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Store Hours:  
Monday - Saturday  
10 am - 6 pm