



*Are You Protecting Your Dental Practice's Data?
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I can still remember when a computer instructor asked a student in a computer technician class, "What is your most important duty to your clients?" The answer to this most important question in my career was "Protect your client data!"

Ask yourself what you would do if you lost all the data in your computer system. Would you know how to recover it? Can you afford to take the chance of losing all of your information? What is this worth to you? It could possibly destroy your business.

Everyday I see new computer threats that can cause great harm to your data and computer system. What are the main things you can do to prevent loosing your data and to protect your system? Today, there are many great devices and software applications that can protect your system.

1. Install a good anti-virus software program on your computers. Along with the viruses that we have known about for years, we now have new threats called "spyware" and "popups". Spyware and Popups get into your system, slowing it down and compromising your data. Spyware also allows third parties to "spy" on your data. You should always keep your anti-virus software and definitions current by downloading them from the anti-virus software sites such as Symantec. These definitions must be updated weekly while the version of your anti-virus application should be updated annually. Without this protection, your system will be exposed to the threats of viruses, spyware and popups.
2. Windows 2000 and XP advise that you download critical updates of the system. This can be set up automatically in your operating software.
3. You should install backup software on your system. Backup software organizes and creates backups of all your data. There are several backup applications starting from \$70.00. Backup software can be programmed to automatically backup your data on a daily or weekly basis. The most common backup is called the "grandfather scheme". This can be done incrementally, Monday to Thursday with a full backup on Fridays. Then another full backup is done at the end of every month. Be sure to keep your Friday and monthly backup CD's at another location. Remember that it is very important for you to verify that your backup is correct on a monthly basis.
4. With the backup software, you need hardware to do the backup. Today most computers come with internal and external devices to backup data. Backup devices include DVD rewriteable CD drives, tape drives, zip drives, one-button external hard drives, and floppy discs (although floppy discs are becoming obsolete). The easiest and most efficient hardware to use is the DVD rewritable CD drive.
5. You should have a good surge suppressor on all of the computers and hardware in your practice. Electrical surges occur often and can damage your computer system and cause you to lose data. You can find a good surge suppressor for about \$25.00. You should replace your surge suppressors every 2 years.

6. You should have a battery backup on the main computer or server. You can purchase a battery backup for about \$50.00. Should there be a power outage, a battery backup allows you to close the main computer system properly without damaging data files or applications.
7. If your system does crash, **do not attempt to reinstall the operating system**. Call a professional to see if they can access the hard drive. If the drive cannot be accessed and you do not have a current backup, call a local professional data recovery shop to have it evaluated. Please note that there is normally a \$100.00 evaluation charge. Depending on the size of the drive, the cost to recover your data starts at \$1000.00.