Top Tips: Removing Spyware from Your Phone

By design, spyware is difficult to detect. And it's no piece of cake to remove, either.

Spyware and its more malevolent cousin, stalkerware, may be used to monitor emails and text messages; to eavesdrop on your calls; to covertly record environmental noise or take photos; to track you; or to hijack your social media apps.

In other words, it's nasty stuff. But if you suspect your phone is infected, there are steps you can take.

- **Run a malware scan.** Mobile antivirus solutions can detect and remove spyware. They're not 100% effective, but this is a good place to start.

- **Change your passwords**. If you suspect account compromise, change all your passwords, making the new ones strong and unique.

- **Enable two-factor authentication.** 2FA is an excellent way to boost your general security. However, you should be aware that in some cases, spyware can intercept the single-use codes sent during 2FA protocols.

- **Update your operating system.** When a new version of an operating system is released, it typically includes security patches and upgrades. Keep yours up to date at all times.

- **PIN-protect your phone.** A PIN code, pattern, or enabling biometrics will protect your mobile device from future tampering. If you haven't enabled this already, it's time!

- **Try a factory reset**. This is a fairly radical solution, to be used when other measures have failed. Performing a factory reset and clean install on your phone will usually eradicate spyware and stalkerware.

- **Consider an upgrade**. Talk about a radical solution! But experts say it's often the oldest phones, which may run software versions no longer patched, that are stuffed with spyware. If your phone is truly elderly and performing poorly, it may be time for a change.

Holiday Travel Tips: Secure Your Home
Before you go over the river and through the woods this holiday season, take steps to secure your home. Burglars enjoy this time of year because they know many homeowners will be away—don't be a victim!
- **Consider an alarm system.** Today's alarms are modular and easily installed, and you can control them through an app. As an alternative, you could always simply put a "Protected by …" alarm sticker on your front door. They are surprisingly effective.
- **Light up the place.** Rather than simply turning on one lamp, purchase a few timers to have various lights and a radio go on and off.

- **Speaking of lights** … A dark exterior is a burglar's best friend. Before you go, make sure all exterior lights are functioning, and turn them on.
- **Trim shrubbery.** Any trees or bushes that could hide an intruder seeking to jimmy a door or window should be pruned.
- **Hold the mail and deliveries.** An overstuffed mailbox or a stoop full of Amazon packages will attract criminals, especially in this age of "porch pirates."
- **Don't forget the garage.** Power tools and yard equipment are coveted by thieves, as they're easily sold for cash. Lock up your garage, shed, or barn as carefully as you do your house.
- **Arrange for maintenance.** Nothing says "This house is vacant" like an overgrown lawn or an unplowed driveway.
- **Get a house-sitter.** Many of the telltales we've mentioned here can be addressed by having a friend, relative, or neighbor live in your home while you're away. Burglars are adept at simply driving through a neighborhood and identifying which houses are occupied and which are not.

Top Tips: Protect Yourself Against Mobile Spyware

Cellphones are under attack from spyware and other malicious software.

As computer users have learned not to trust email messages, attackers have shifted their focus from email to text messages, which most people read with less skepticism.

Now, however, criminals are finding ways to install intrusive spyware on phones and tablets. These tools can then be used to collect data for identity theft.

How do you know if your phone has been compromised? Be warned it's not always easy; some sophisticated spyware operates invisibly in the background.

But if your battery begins draining rapidly, your phone is physically hot, or strange apps begin popping up on your home screen, spyware may be the culprit.

What you can do? Here are tips from experts on safeguarding your phone:
- Keep your operating system and apps updated with the latest versions, which typically include security patches.
- Don't share your PIN or allow others to use your phone.
- Don't "jailbreak" your device; this decreases its security.
- Be sure to download apps only from Apple's App Store or Google's Play Store. While this is not a perfect solution, apps not found in these stores are far more likely to cause problems.
- Never click links in texts or emails from unknown sources. In fact, be wary even of links from people you do know; their account may have been hacked.
- Before downloading an app, read its end user licensing agreement. If any of the demands seem unreasonable or sketchy, skip that app.
- Occasionally go to Settings and take a look at every app you have installed. If you don't remember why you wanted it, or if it requires a lot of memory and you never use it, uninstall.