KEEP WINDOWS DEFENDER OFFLINE IN YOUR TOOL KIT

If you are not able to start your computer due to a malware infection, the **Windows Defender Offline (WDO)** is a stand-alone deep scan utility that runs from a bootable CD or USB flash drive. You can also use Windows Defender Offline as an adjunct to the full scan option of your installed anti-virus software.

When to Use an Offline Malware Scanner

If a virus is clever enough to disable your anti-virus program, render it ineffective, or foul up your hard drive's boot sector, you'll need something other than a standard anti-malware program to repair the damage. That's when you need offline protection: a bootable CD or flash drive that contains an effective malware detection and removal program. Consider making such an emergency kit and keep it handy. (The alternative is to re-install Windows on the hard drive, possibly losing your files in the process.)

Microsoft's [Windows Defender Offline](#) (this is a hyperlink) is a **free** emergency anti-malware program for Windows systems. You can download the 32-bit or 64-bit version from this page. If you're not sure which version you need, there's a link on the download page to help you determine if your PC is running the 32-bit or 64-bit version of Windows.)

When you run the installation program, it will prompt you for a blank CD, DVD, or flash drive with at least 250 MB of free space. It's best to use a flash drive as your Windows Defender Offline medium. Malware changes daily, and so does the malware signatures data file. A flash drive is re-writable, so Windows Defender Offline will download the latest signatures file if it is installed on a flash drive; not so with write-once optical media.

During installation, the latest database of malware signatures will be downloaded, so you will need an active Internet connection. Windows Defender Offline will be installed on the removable medium along with the signatures and files necessary to boot from the medium. Store the medium in a safe place until you need Windows Defender Offline.