Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

Media release

Passwords need to be strong, memorable and unique

Account and device passwords are your first line of defence in the fight against malicious actors and passwords should be strong, memorable and unique.

On International Computer Security Day, the Australian Digital Health Agency is advising people to follow these good password practices:

1. Don't share your password with others as you could be held responsible for their actions, which could result in disclosure of sensitive information.
2. Always use a unique password for each account to help prevent the 'domino effect'. This is where all accounts using the same password are compromised, when the password is discovered.
3. Consider using a password manager if you have trouble remembering your passwords, but make sure you use a very strong master password.
4. If you suspect someone knows your password, choose a new password immediately to reduce the likelihood of unauthorised access to information.
5. A strong password is long, for example 14 characters or more, and includes a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers and special characters.

Agency CEO Amanda Cattermole said "Developing and using good passwords is a contemporary life skill everyone can adopt to protect themselves at home and at work.

"Having weak passwords is comparable to leaving your front door open when you leave home or leaving your car unlocked. It's an invitation to unauthorised access and cyber compromise.

"Take some time on International Computer Security Day to read the Agency's password fact sheet 'Your password – the key to all your information', which includes tips on how to create strong passwords and outlines good password practices. It also provides information regarding the use of password managers and highlights the importance of using multi-factor authentication whenever it's available to provide added protection to your accounts and information.

"If you suspect someone knows your password, choose a new password immediately to reduce the likelihood of unauthorised access to information."

Ms Cattermole noted a report that found while 80% of people say they are concerned about the security of their personal information, 81% of confirmed data breaches involve weak, default or stolen passwords.[1]

Learn more

The Agency has a free Digital Health Security Awareness course that covers a number of security topics to equip people who work in healthcare to recognise and manage security risks. The course, which was developed in consultation with representatives from a range of healthcare settings and disciplines, includes

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[1] Verizon 2017 Data Breach Investigation Report. Available from: https://enterprise.verizon.com/resources/reports/2017_dbir.pdf

a module focussed on password management, together with topics that address common security risks relevant to healthcare organisations.

To find out more about how you can protect information that you access online, visit:

- eLearning course - Digital Health Security Awareness (Module 3: Passwords)
- Fact sheet - Your password – the key to all your information
- Guidance (NZ Government) - Password Managers

International Computer Security Day was declared in 1988. This day was established '*in response to burgeoning threats of cyber-attacks … to raise public awareness every November 30.'²*

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About the Australian Digital Health Agency

The Agency is tasked with improving health outcomes for all Australians through the delivery of digital healthcare systems, and implementing *Australia's National Digital Health Strategy – Safe, Seamless, and Secure*: *evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia* in collaboration with partners across the community. The Agency is the System Operator of My Health Record, and provides leadership, coordination, and delivery of a collaborative and innovative approach to utilising technology to support and enhance a clinically safe and connected national health system. These improvements will give individuals more control of their health and their health information, and support healthcare providers to deliver informed healthcare through access to current clinical and treatment information. Further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.

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² National Computer Security Day https://nationaltoday.com/national-computer-security-day/#:~:text=National%20Computer%20Security%20Day%20%E2%80%93%20November%2030%2C%202020