Email Hoaxes

A hoax is an action done to trick or deceive a person. Email hoaxes are deliberate email messages warning about false viruses. In these messages there is often a suggestion to remove an important file and/or send the false warning to everyone in your email address book.

How to spot a Hoax:

1. Note whether the text was actually written by the person who sent it to you. If not, be skeptical.
2. Look for the telltale phrase, "Forward this to everyone you know."
3. Look for statements like "This is not a hoax" or "This is not an urban legend." They usually mean the opposite of what they say.
4. Look for overly emphatic language, the frequent use of UPPERCASE LETTERS and multiple exclamation marks !!!!!!!
5. If the message seems geared more to persuade than to inform, be suspicious. Hoaxers are out to push emotional buttons.
6. If the message purports to give you extremely important information that you've never heard of before or seen elsewhere in legitimate sources, be suspicious.
7. Read carefully and think critically about what the message says, looking for logical inconsistencies, violations of common sense and obviously false claims.
8. Look for subtle or not-so-subtle jokes, indications that the author is pulling your leg.
9. Check for references to outside sources. Hoaxes will not typically name any, nor link to Websites with corroborating information.
10. Check to see if the message has been debunked by Websites that cover Internet hoaxes.

Tips:

1. Virtually any chain email you receive (i.e., any message forwarded multiple times) is more likely to be false than true. Be skeptical.
2. Hoaxers usually try every means available to make their lies believable -- e.g., mimicking a journalistic style, attributing the text to a "legitimate" source, etc.
3. Be especially wary of health-related rumors. Most importantly, never act on such rumors without first verifying their accuracy with your doctor or other reliable source.