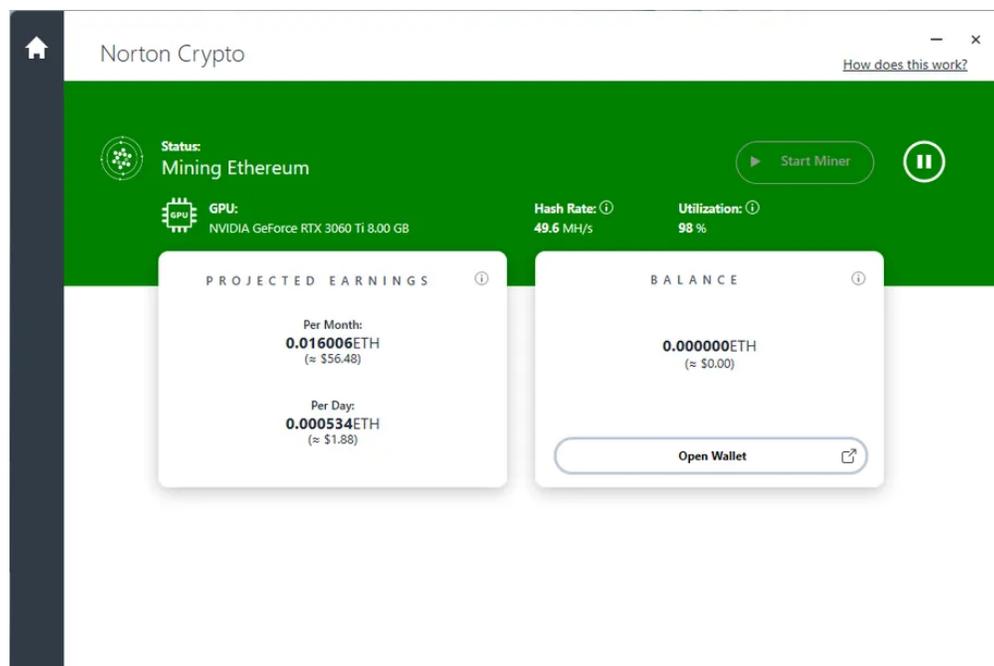


Here's the truth about the crypto miner that comes with Norton Antivirus

Some online accusations aren't exactly correct, but that doesn't mean it's a good deal

By [Mitchell Clark](#) | Jan 7, 2022, 12:00pm EST



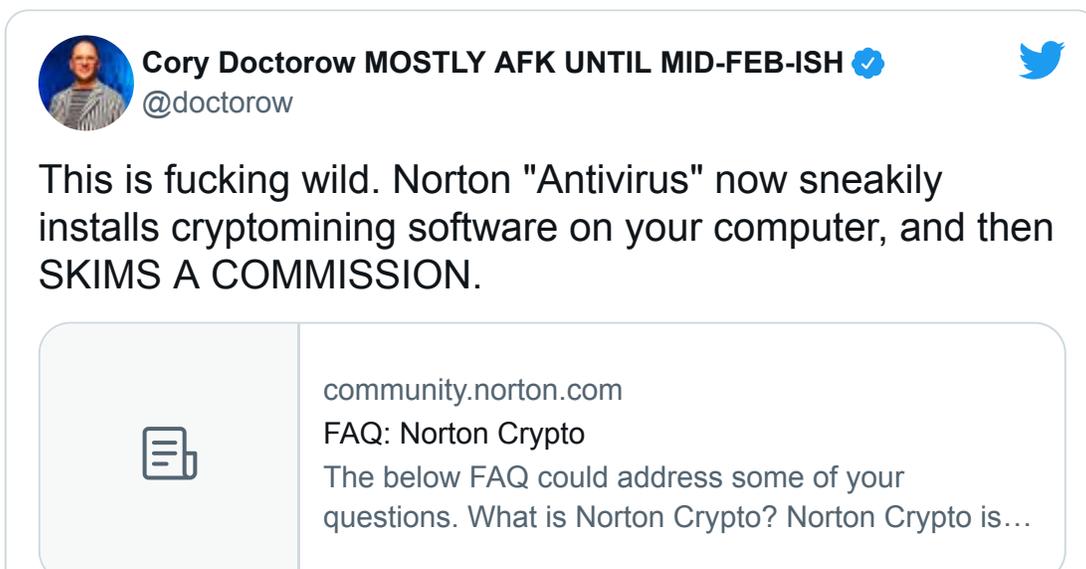
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Norton is facing criticism for including a crypto miner alongside its Norton 360 security software. Activists like Cory Doctorow [have claimed](#) that the company “sneakily installs cryptomining software on your computer” and skims a commission on profits, and outlets like [PCMag](#), [Krebs on Security](#), and [Digital Trends](#) have also written about users expressing frustration trying to uninstall it. While there’s more than a grain of truth to these claims, we dug into it ourselves and found they’re being blown out of proportion.

Last summer, [Norton very publicly announced](#) it was adding a crypto miner to its Norton 360 security suite, pitching it as a safer alternative to trying to install complex, “unvetted” mining programs from the internet. It was initially only available to a limited number of users, but now seems to be available to anyone who installs the program — but in the six or so months since the announcement, there hasn’t been much discussion about the software until this week.



A screenshot of a tweet from Cory Doctorow (@doctorow). The tweet text reads: "This is fucking wild. Norton 'Antivirus' now sneakily installs cryptomining software on your computer, and then SKIMS A COMMISSION." Below the text is a link to a document titled "FAQ: Norton Crypto" from community.norton.com. The document preview text says: "The below FAQ could address some of your questions. What is Norton Crypto? Norton Crypto is..."

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himself and did indeed find that the mining app NCrypt.exe was included in the program's directory.

However, that doesn't mean that Norton will automatically start mining on your computer, as some seem to believe. [Norton's FAQ](#) says that it won't mine without permission and that "in addition to having a device that meets system requirements, you must also turn on Norton Crypto on your device." Sean says that as far as he could tell, this appeared to be true; the feature didn't surreptitiously activate after he installed Norton. It didn't open until he asked it to.

The TL;DR is that yes, Norton does install a crypto miner with its software, without making that clear in the initial setup process. But it isn't going to do anything unless you specifically opt in, so it's not a situation where you'll install the security suite and instantly start seeing your computer lag as it crunches crypto in the background.

YOU CAN DELETE NCRIPT.EXE IF YOU TURN OFF THE TAMPER PROTECTION FEATURE

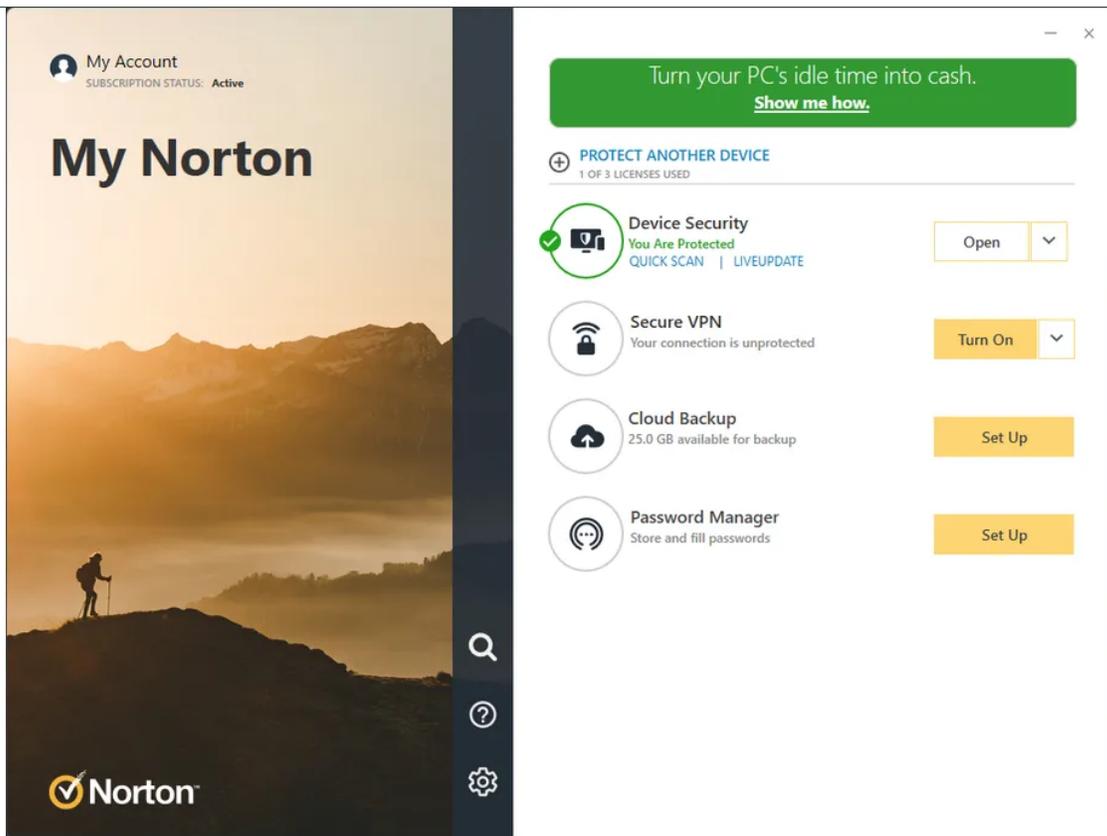
A NortonLifeLock spokesperson also told *The Verge* in an email that you can completely remove NCrypt.exe by [temporarily turning off Norton's tamper protection feature](#), and then deleting the executable. We confirmed that ourselves, and it could be good news for anyone worried about Norton remotely activating the feature.

We asked Norton if it would make a pledge that the feature would always be opt-in, and spokesperson Spring Harris told us that "[the] feature requires special device hardware and user consent to function. We are transparent about how our software performs on

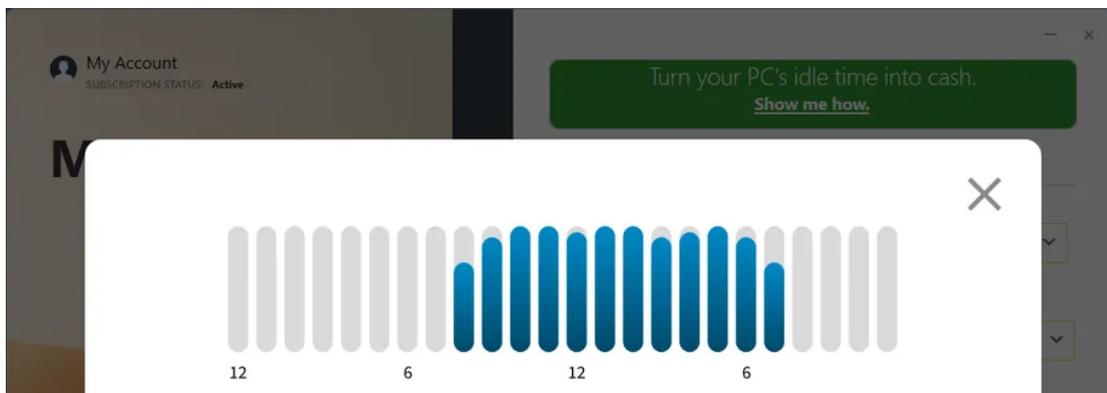
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Norton Crypto isn't a hard feature to find. | Screenshot: Sean Hollister / The Verge



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After you turn on Norton Crypto, it'll set up a wallet for you, and immediately start using your computer's GPU to mine Ethereum (its [system requirements](#) say you need an Nvidia or AMD card with at least 6GB of memory). Any earnings will be periodically deposited in the wallet set up for you, and [once you reach a minimum threshold](#) you'll be able to withdraw your earnings to Coinbase.

Norton has incentive to get people using the feature. As [BleepingComputer pointed out when it tried the software last year](#), Norton takes a whopping 15 percent of any earnings you make from mining. Without diving too deep into how mining works, Norton Crypto's [terms of service](#) (PDF) say it's running a mining pool, which combines everybody's computing power to increase the chances of mining a block — when that happens, everybody who contributed power gets a share of the reward. It's that reward from which Norton is taking its cut.

Pool operators do often take a cut or fee for bringing everyone together. However, the fees are usually closer to 1 or 2 percent, which is obviously significantly lower. And, of course, there's the elephant in the room: anyone using Norton's software to mine has already paid the company a subscription fee for its security software (and after we purchased a copy, we *a/so* had to provide our payment information so that it could automatically renew itself every year).

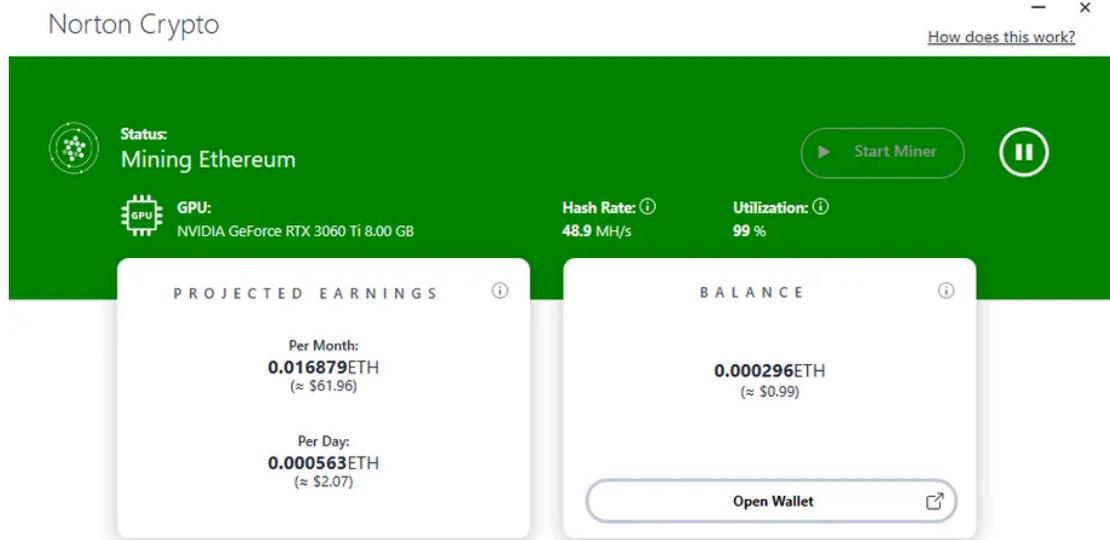
OUR TESTS PRETTY MUCH EXACTLY BROKE EVEN WHEN FACTORING IN ELECTRICITY COSTS

Is the reward from mining good enough that you can ignore the high fees, or consider them a convenience cost for not having to figure out how to join a pool on your own

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Norton tells you how much you've earned and gives you projected earnings. | Screenshot: Sean Hollister / The Verge

Given *The Verge's* policy against holding cryptocurrency, we'll be immediately divesting the fraction of an ETH we earned in our test.

Even if you had stronger mining hardware and cheaper electricity, Norton's model could end up being a rough deal. It deposits your cut of Ethereum into your Norton Crypto wallet, but if you want to use it or exchange it for fiat currency you'll have to cash it out — currently, the only option for that is by transferring it to a Coinbase account. However, doing so will incur a transaction fee ([also known as a gas fee](#)) that's charged by the Ethereum network itself. That could mean that you'd have to mine a lot of crypto before it'd make financial sense to withdraw it from your Norton wallet.

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