

Health Information Compliance Alert

Reader Question: What's The Difference Between 'Patches' & 'Updates?'

Question: Are "patches" and "updates" the same thing? If not, what's the difference between the two?

Answer: Unless you're particularly tech-savvy, terms like "patches" and "updates" can be confusing, especially when they're often used synonymously.

"Patches" are specifically designed to fix a problem or security vulnerability to existing software, operating systems, programs, or applications, according to a Feb. 12 tutorial by **Mary Beth Gettins** of **Gettins' Law LLC**. "Updates," on the other hand, can include new features, improvements and patches to existing software, operating systems, programs, or applications.

Both patches and updates modify existing computer programs, operating systems, or software. "However, patches are specifically designed to fix a problem or vulnerability," Gettins explained. "Unlike patches, updates may offer improvements or enhancement. And sometimes patches (i.e., fixes) may be incorporated into an update."