

Google Chrome - Privacy Checkup

Compiled by the Clinic to End Tech Abuse

Last Updated: May 28, 2020

What are browser extensions?

A web browser is a program you use to go to websites or search the internet. Examples include Google Chrome, Safari, Firefox, and Microsoft Edge.

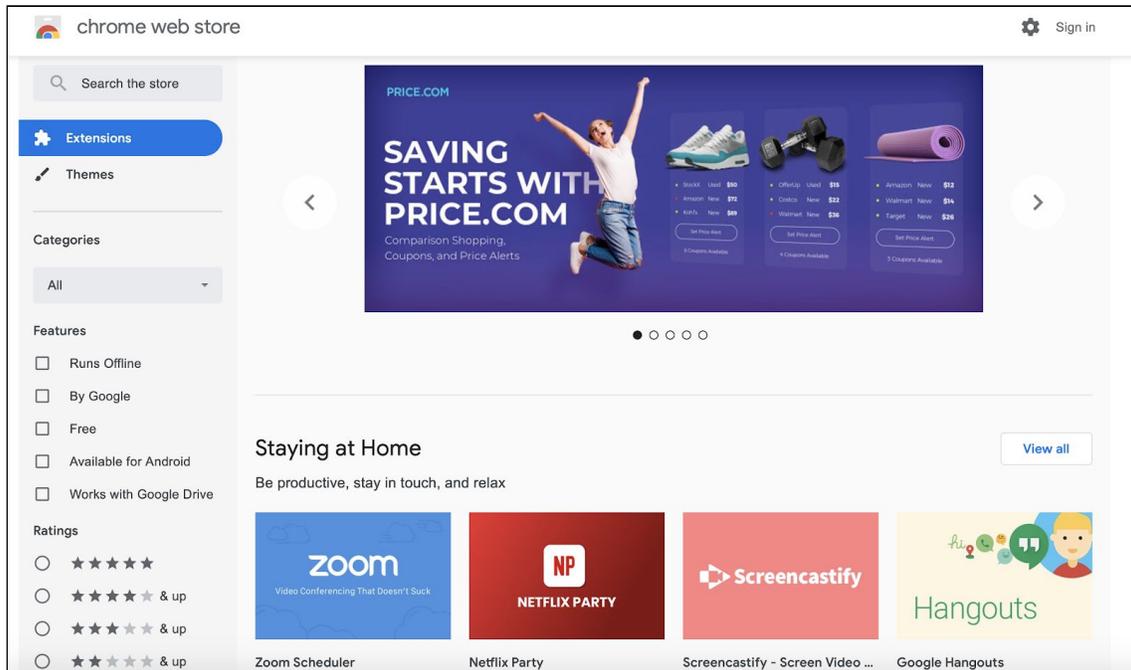
A browser extension is a program you or someone else can install that expands what your web browser can do, or set it to do things automatically.

Not all browser extensions are harmful, and some are useful or meant to be fun. However, some extensions could let an abusive person track what you do online or otherwise harm you.

This guide shows you how to check what extensions are installed for Google Chrome on your device. For safety and privacy, it can be important to check which extensions are installed in your Google Chrome browser and remove those that you do not want.

Additionally, this guide will help you to check if the Sync Google Chrome feature is turned on. If it is, all your Chrome extensions are automatically synced on all of your devices, which could allow an abusive partner to get information about you from various devices.

Google Chrome extensions can be downloaded from the Chrome Web Store (<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/category/extensions?h1=en>):



An image of the Chrome Web Store.

Who is this guide for?

Anyone who would like to strengthen their security and privacy on Google Chrome. It is especially for anyone who is concerned that an abusive person may be secretly getting access to their private information.

What does this guide cover?

- How to check, disable, and remove extensions that are installed for your Google Chrome browser
- How to update Google Chrome
- How to check Google Chrome's privacy and security settings
- How to check if the Sync feature is turned on

Before we start:

- If an abusive person has installed and is using a Google Chrome extension to get private information about you, they may know right away if you disable or remove the extension because they would stop receiving information about you.
- We strongly recommend that you talk to a domestic violence or other appropriate organization to make plans for your safety before you disable or remove a Google Chrome extension if you are worried about violence or threats.
- We have marked changes that could be visible to an abuser with the following sign:

 **Be careful!**
This action could be visible to abuser

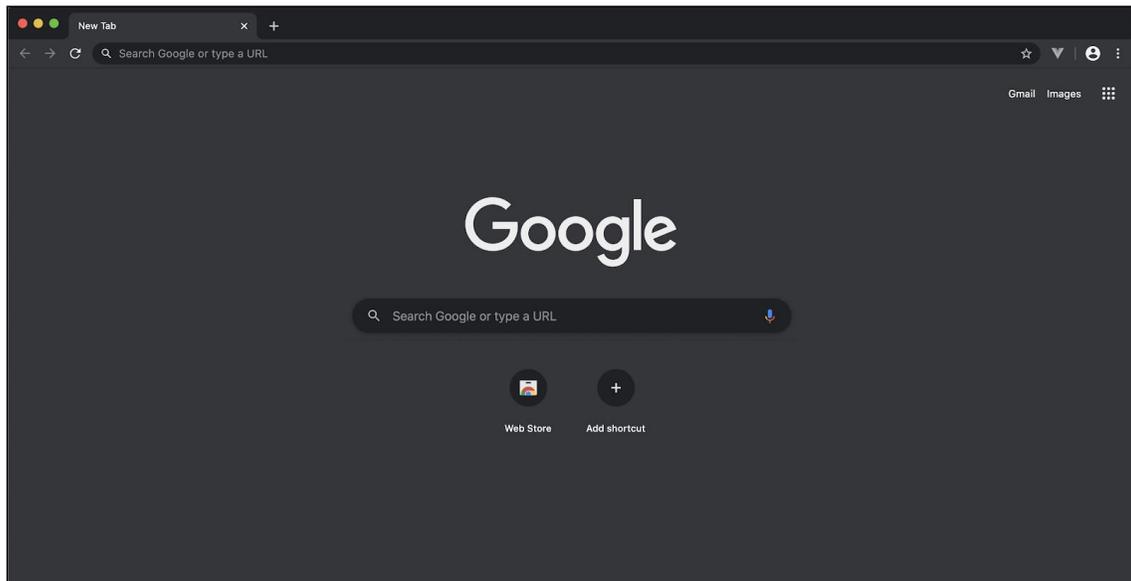
Images of Google Chrome are included below for educational and research purposes only.

I. Checking for Installed Chrome Extensions

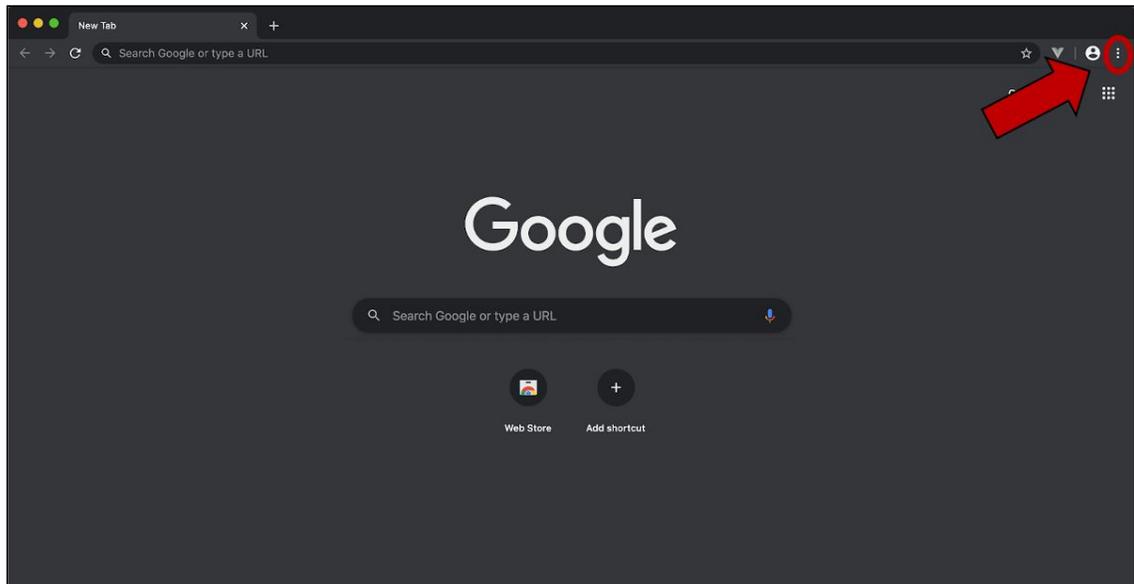
Open **Google Chrome** by clicking on its icon:



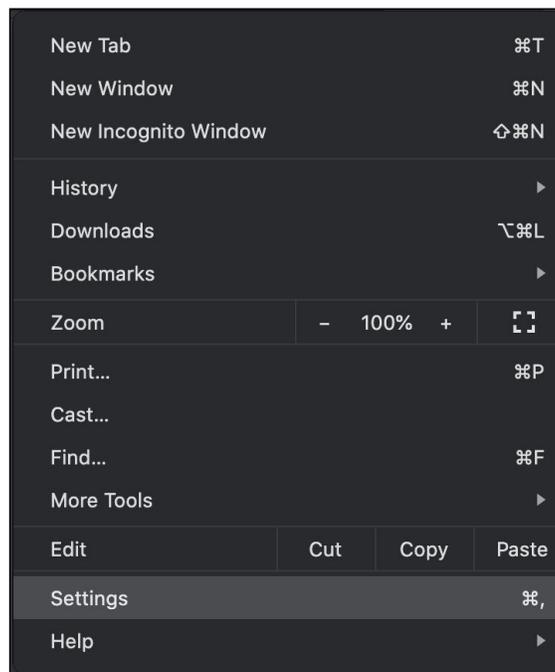
You will see something like this, often with a white background:



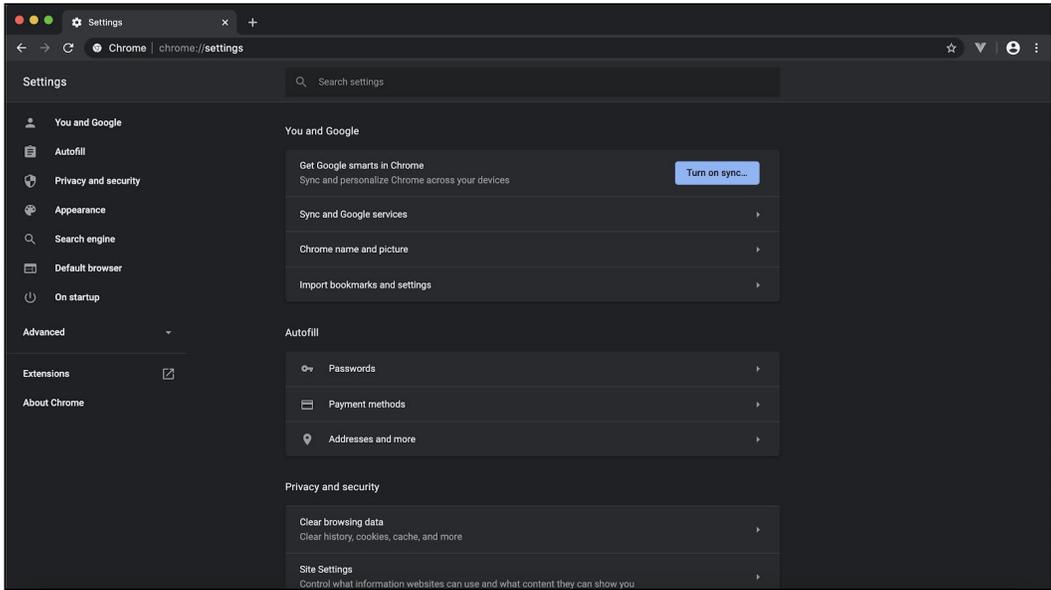
Click on the **three dots** at the top right corner:



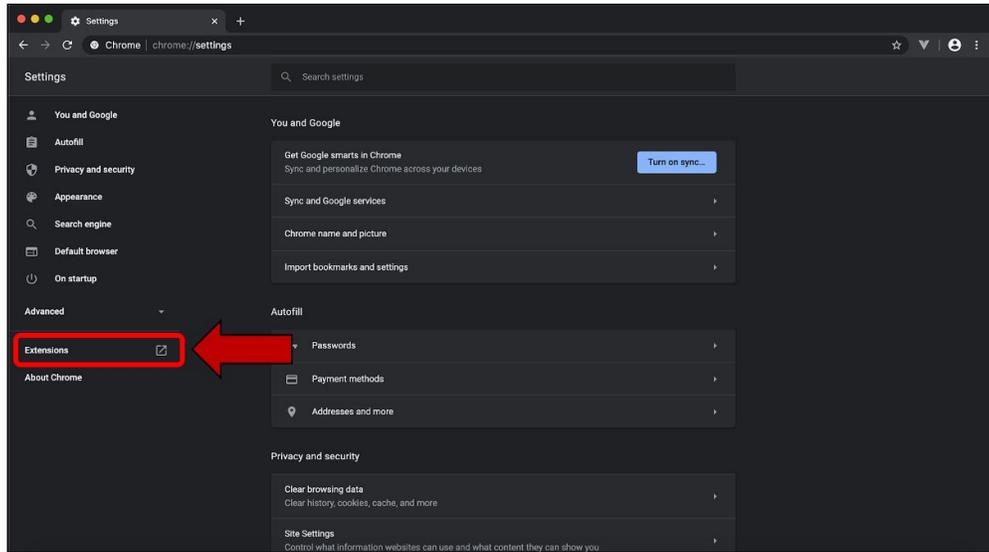
Then, click on **Settings**:



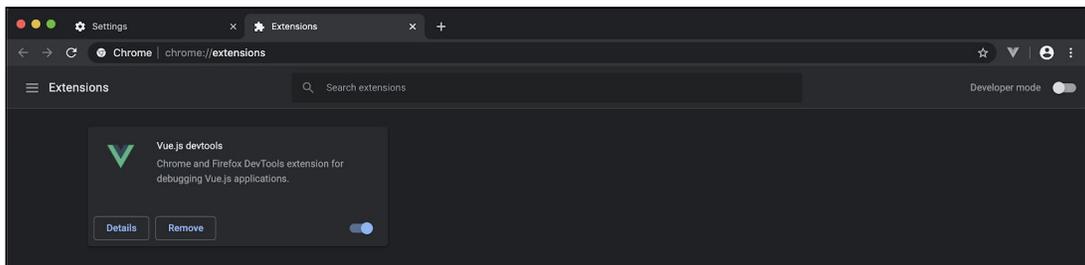
The following page will appear:



On the menu on the left, click on **Extensions**:



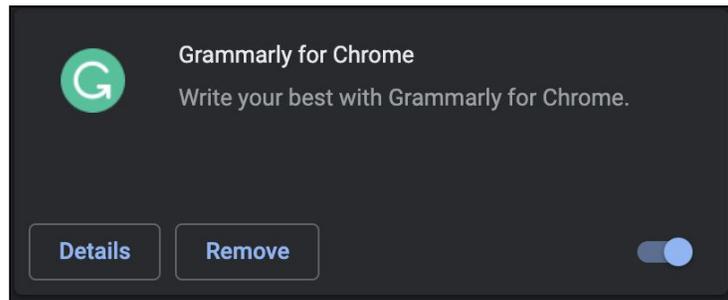
A new tab will open. You should see the current extensions installed on your browser:



II. Understanding, Disabling and Removing a Chrome Extension

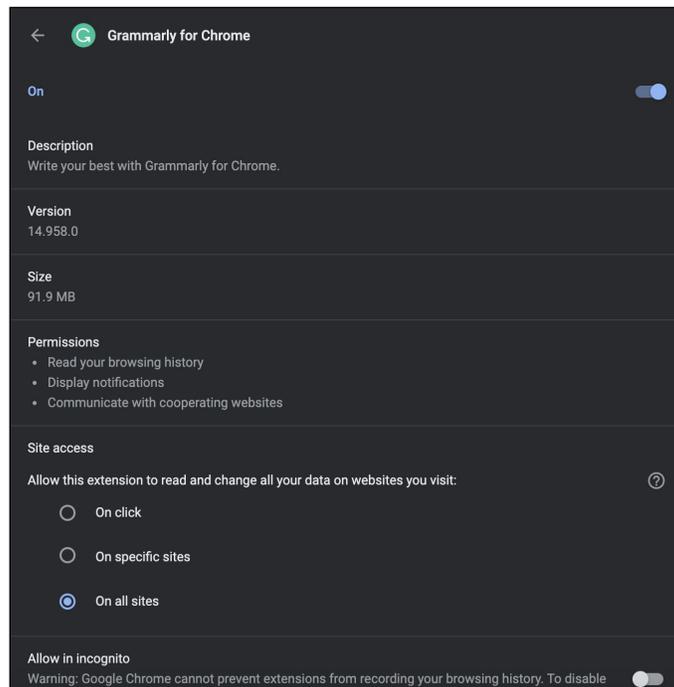
For each of the Chrome extensions that is installed for your Chrome browser, you should see a box with two buttons at the bottom left corner: **Details** and **Remove**. There will also be a **toggle button** on the bottom right corner.

This is an example browser extension (you might or might not have it installed on your browser too):



Details

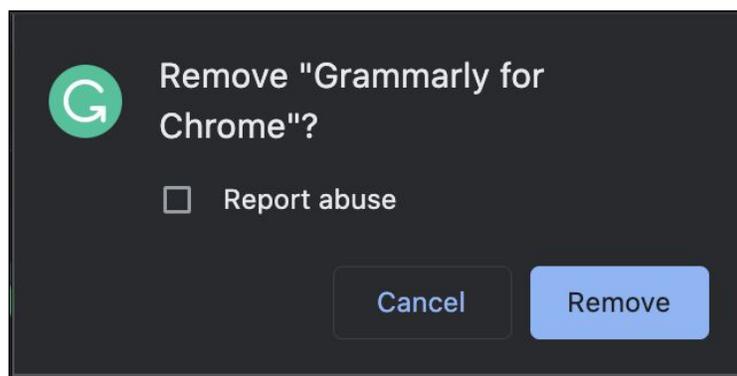
If you click on the **Details** button, you will see information about the extension:



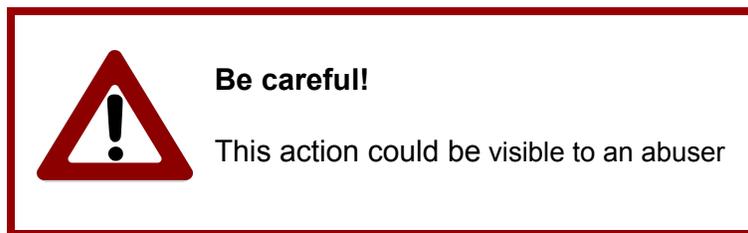
You can read the displayed information to learn more about what the extension does. Using a safe device, you can also do a web search for information about the extension. We recommend that you do not use the same Chrome browser whose safety is being checked. If the extension is harmful, someone may have written about it in the past.

Remove

If you click on the **Remove** button, a popup will appear to confirm that you want to remove the extension:



If you click on **Remove**, the Chrome extension will be removed.

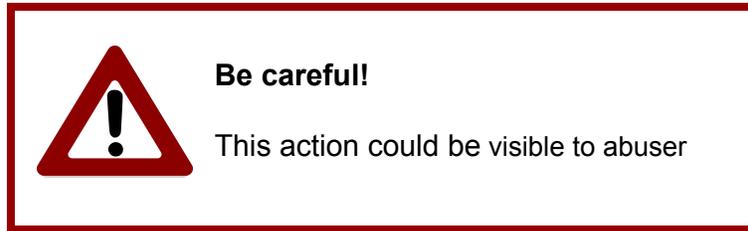


If an abusive person has installed and is using a Google Chrome extension to monitor you, they may know right away if you remove it because they would stop receiving updates and information about you.

We strongly recommend that you talk to a domestic violence or other appropriate organization to make plans for your safety before you remove a Google Chrome extension if you are worried about violence or threats.

Disable

If you click on the **toggle button** (which looks like an on/off switch), you will disable the extension.



If the abuser has installed and is using a Google Chrome extension to monitor you, they may know right away if you disable it because they would stop receiving updates and information about you.

We strongly recommend that you talk to a domestic violence or other appropriate organization to make plans for your safety before you disable a Google Chrome extension if you are worried about violence or threats.

Take into account that:

	... means that the extension is enabled
	... means that the extension is disabled

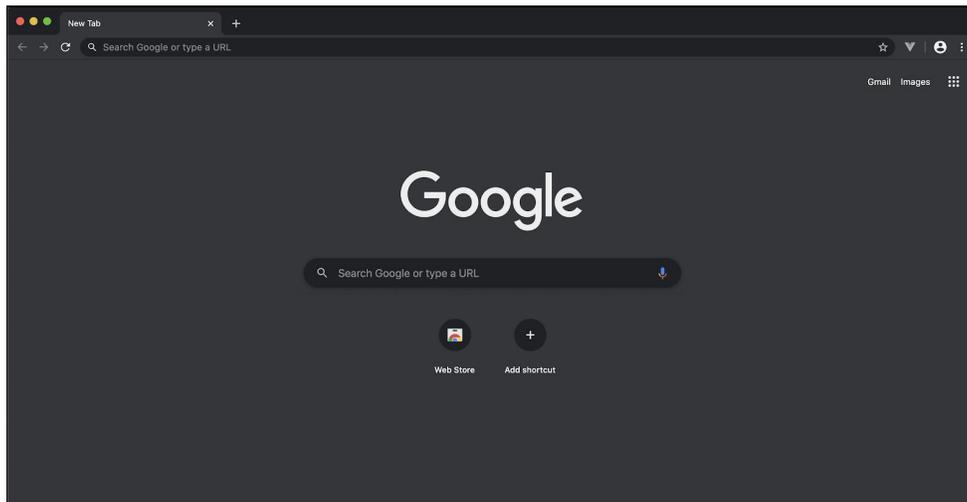
III. How Can I Update Google Chrome?

We recommend you to update Google Chrome, since new versions provide more privacy features and solve security problems that harmful extensions might take advantage of when you use an older version of Chrome.

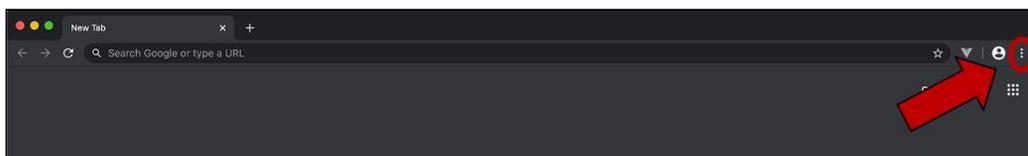
Open **Google Chrome** by clicking on its icon:



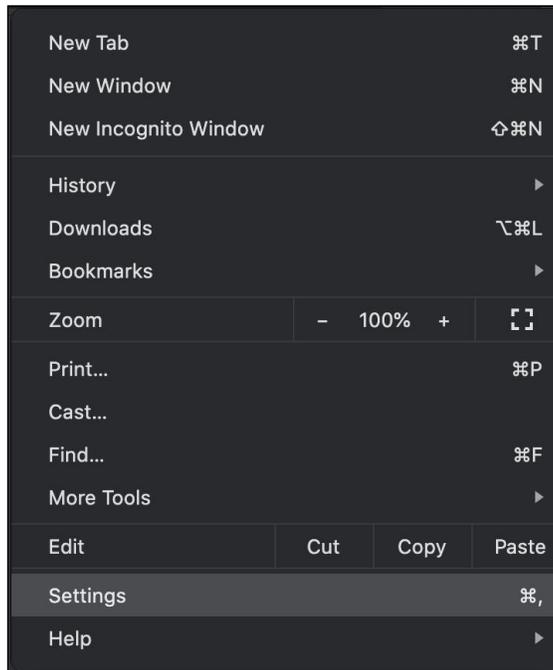
You will see something like this:



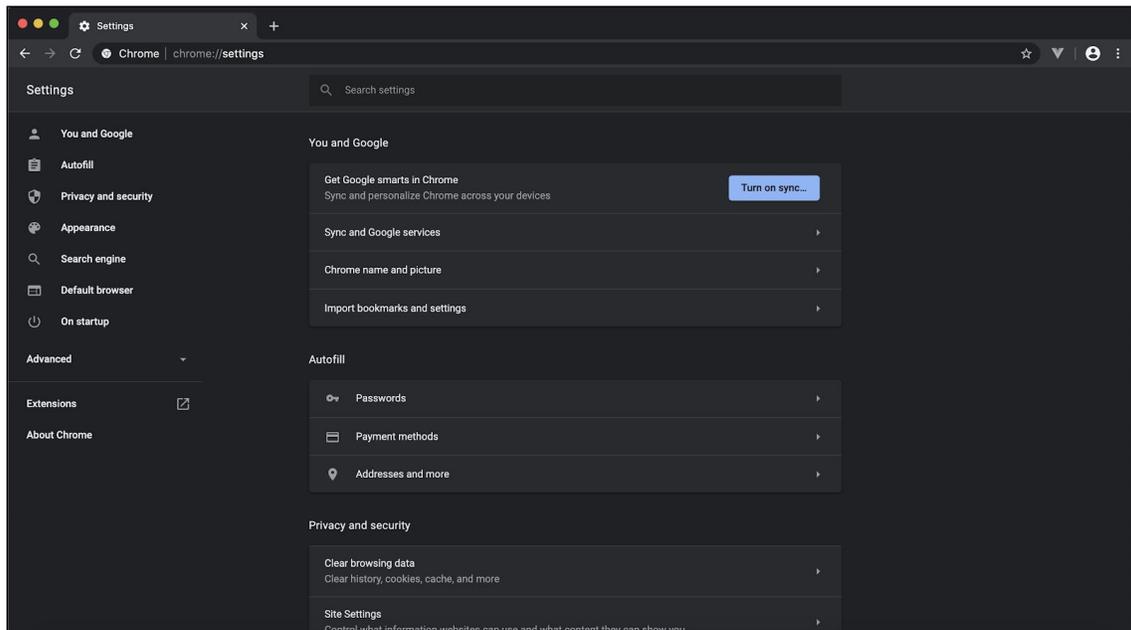
Click on the **three dots** at the top right corner:



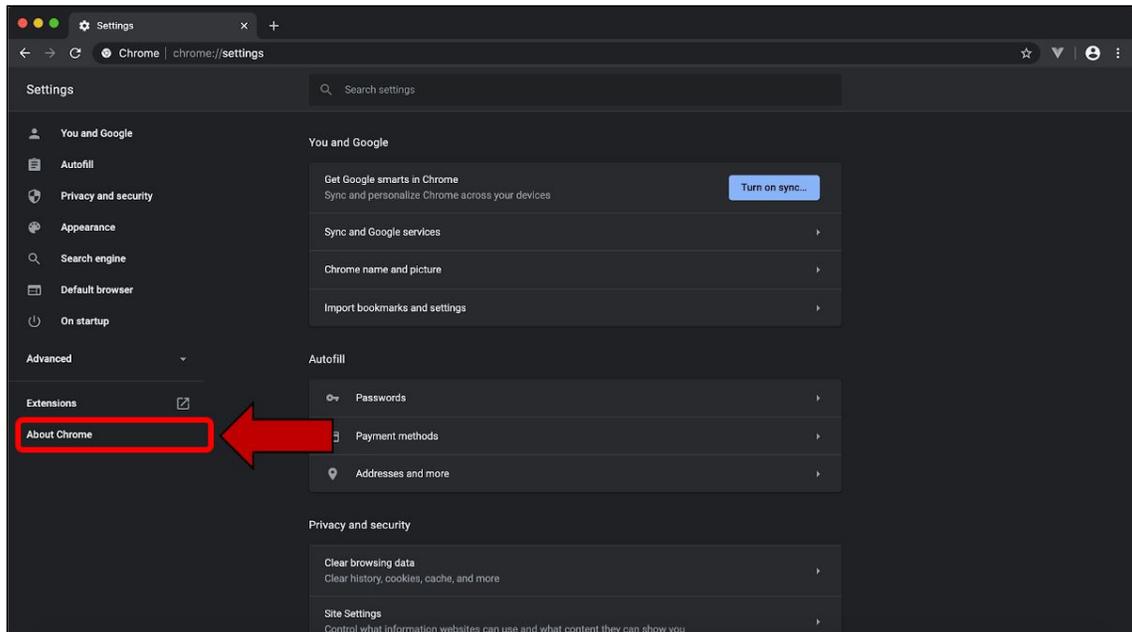
Then, click on **Settings**:



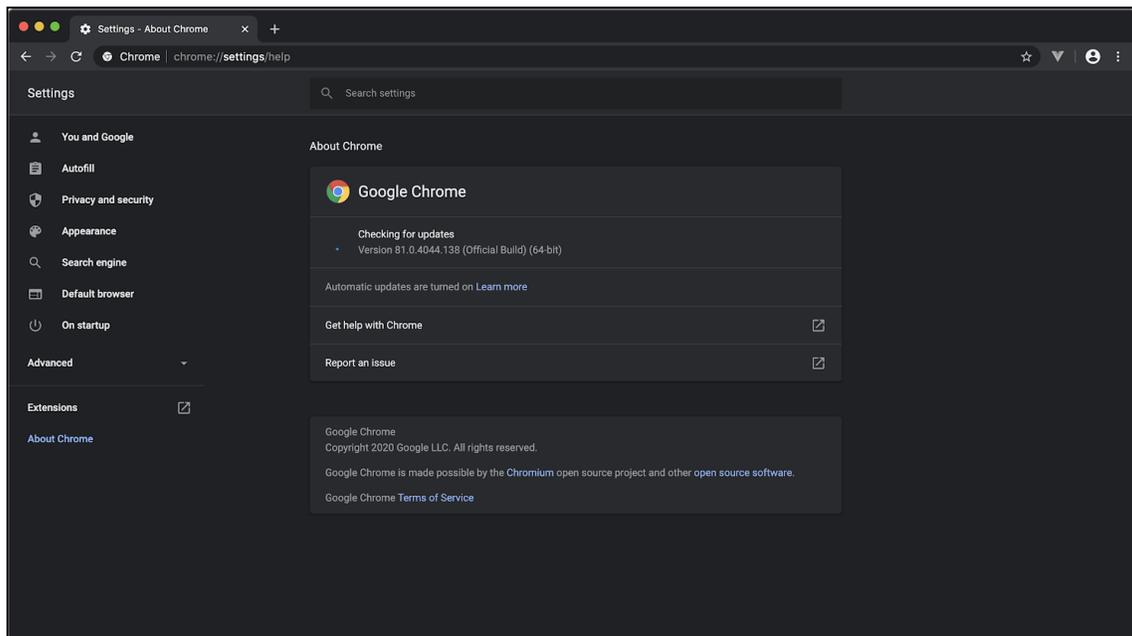
The following will appear:



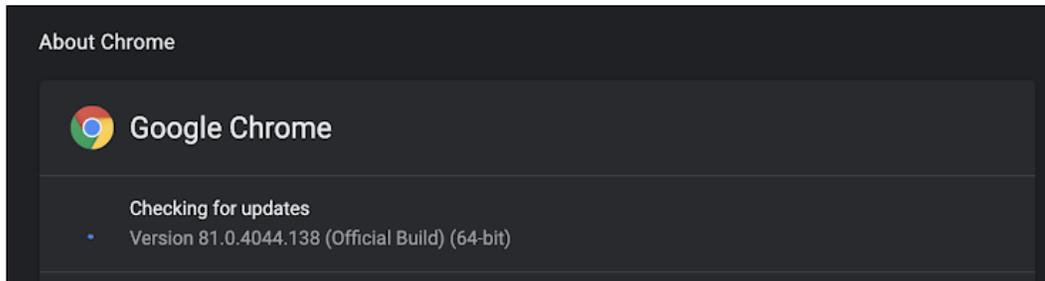
On the menu on the left, click on **About Chrome**:



The following will appear:

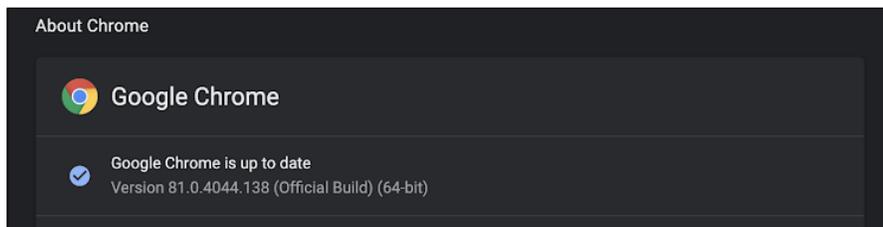


Chrome will check if there is an update available:



If Chrome finds that an update is available, it will automatically update itself or it will show you a button you need to click to start the update.

After it finishes updating, you will see something like this:



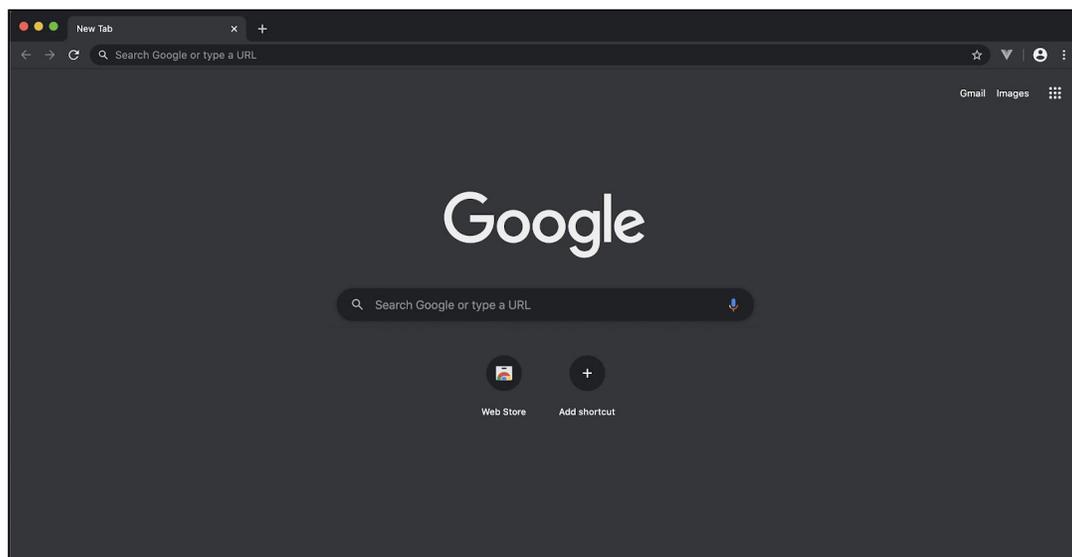
IV. Checking Google Chrome's Privacy and Security Settings

If someone has access to your device, they could find out several types of information about you by looking in your Chrome browser. For example, they could find out what websites you have visited. This is why it is important for you to review your browser's privacy and security settings.

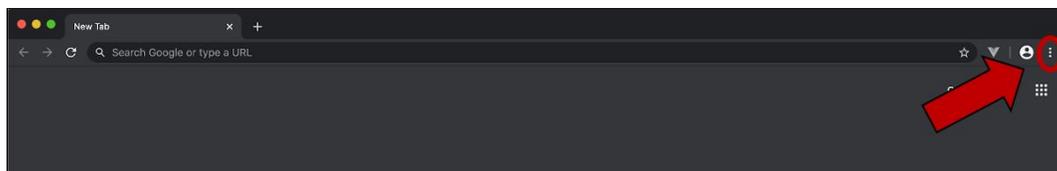
Open **Google Chrome** by clicking on its icon:



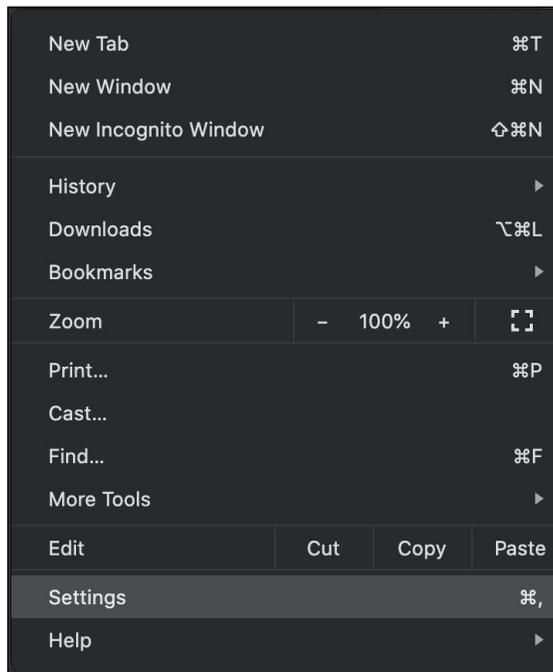
You will see something like this:



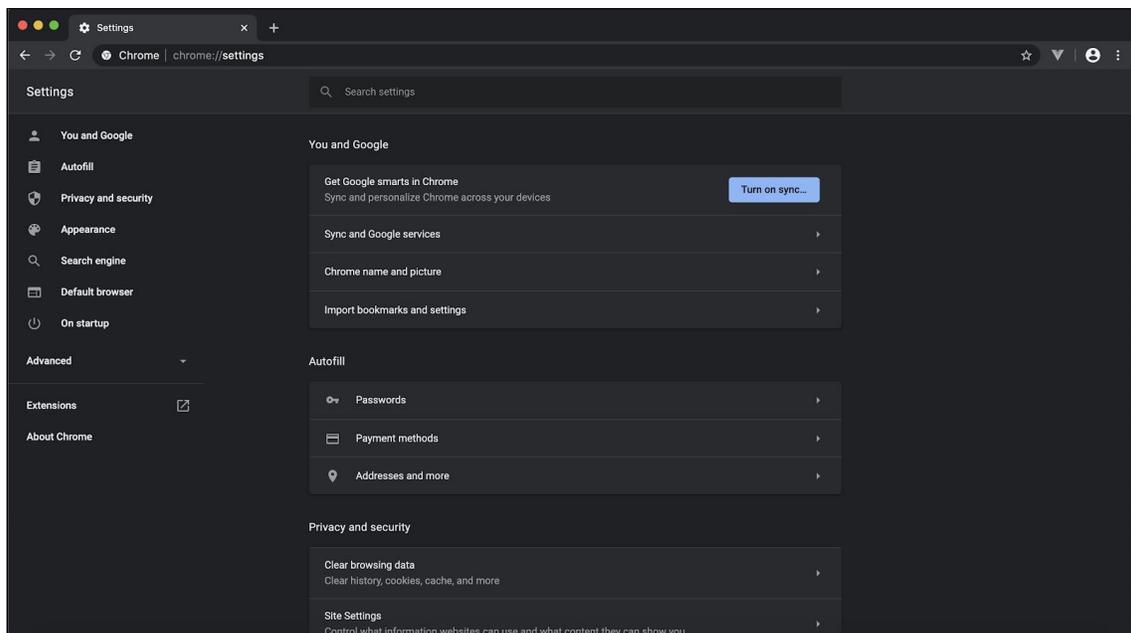
Click on the **three dots** at the top right corner:



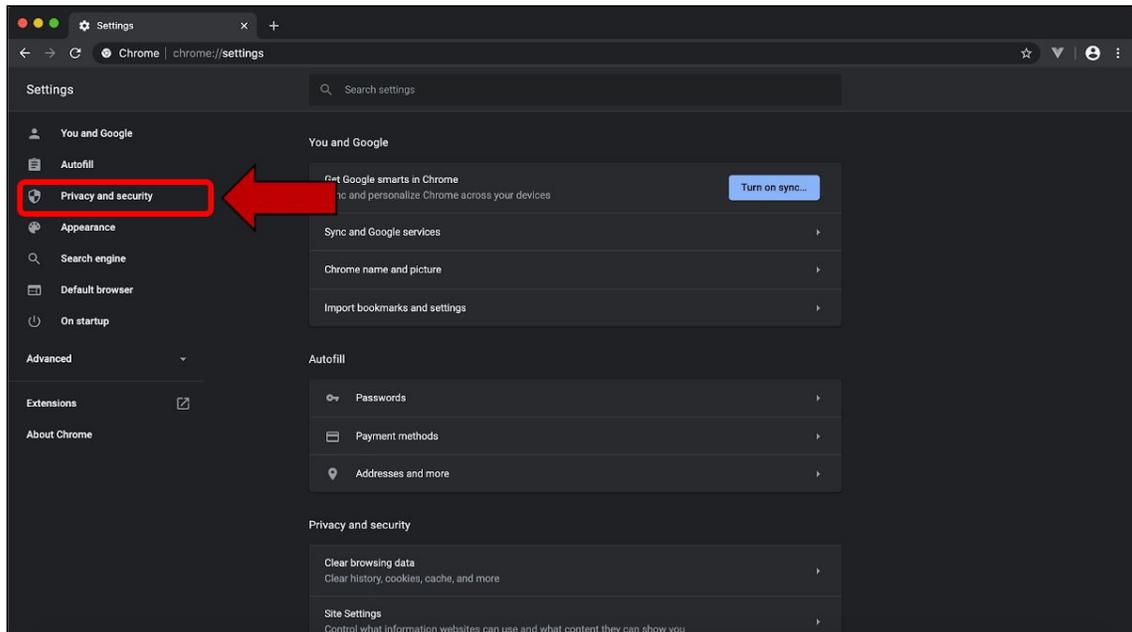
Then, click on **Settings**:



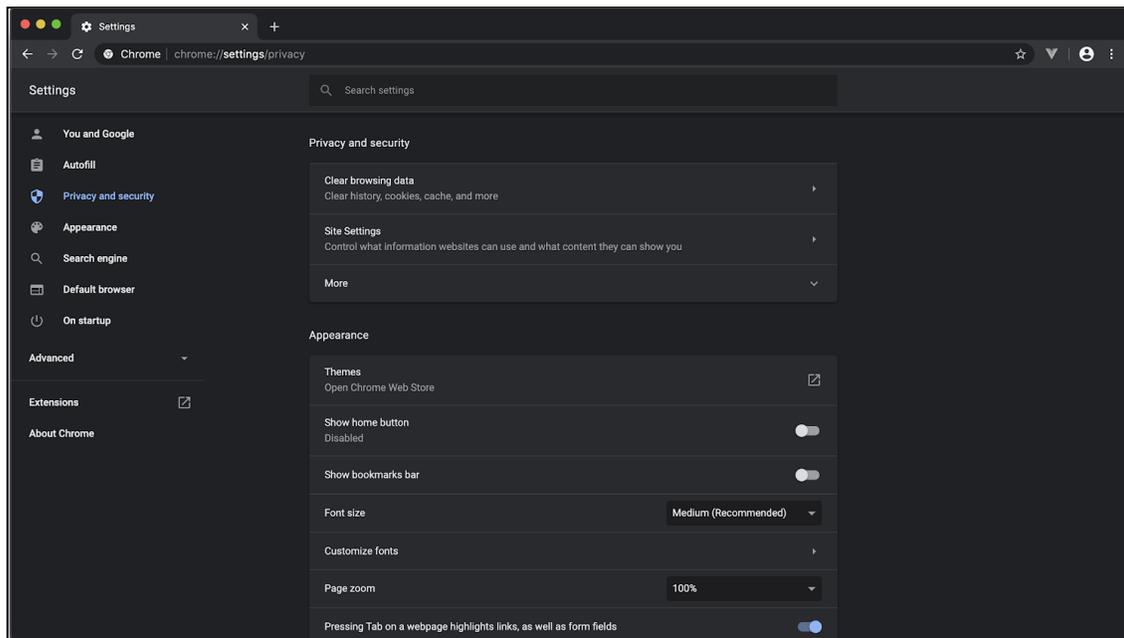
The following will appear:



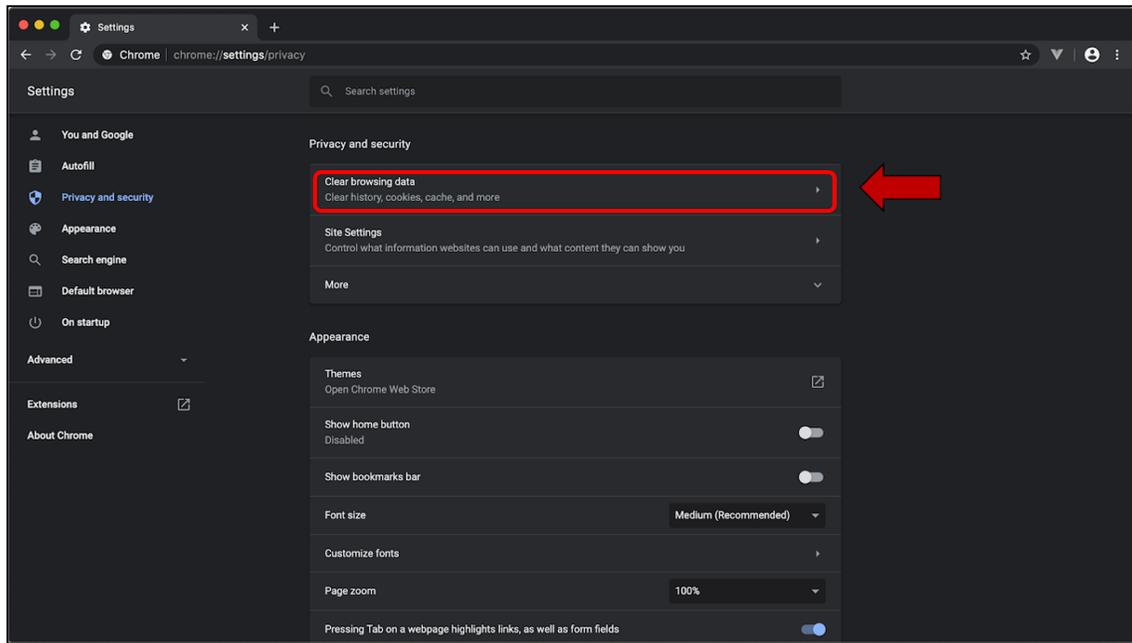
If you want to clear your web browsing history (the list of websites you've visited), look at the menu on the left. Click on **Privacy and security**:



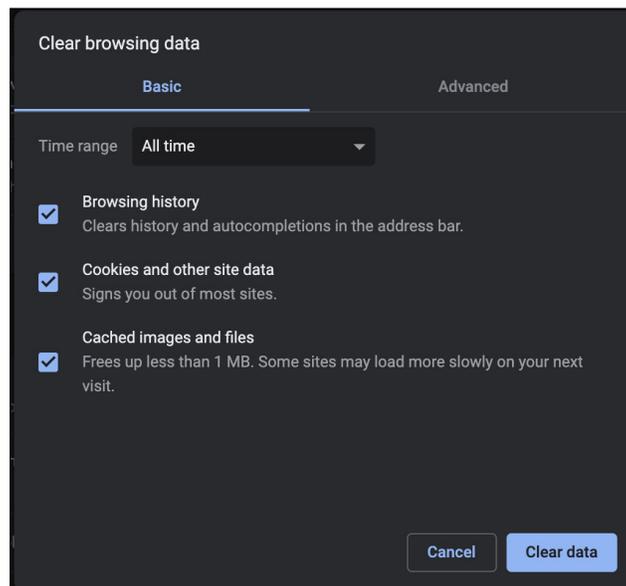
The following will appear:



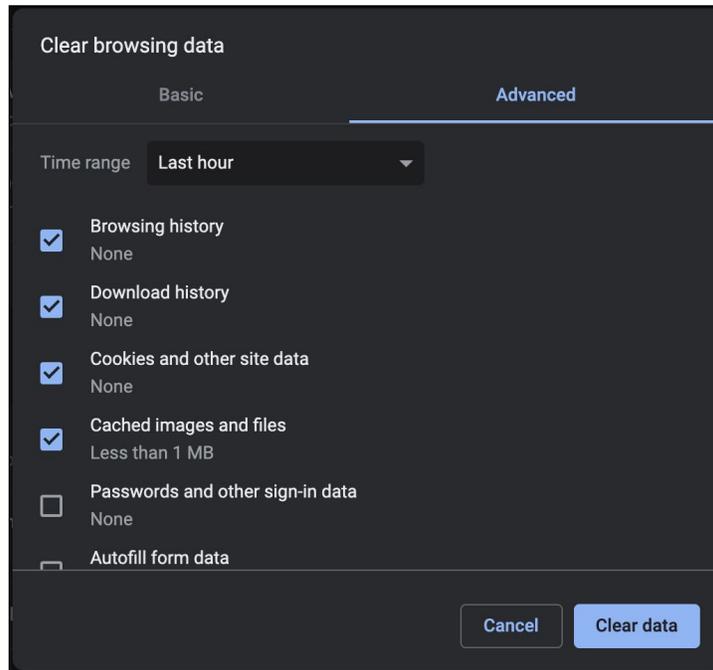
Click on **Clear browsing data**:



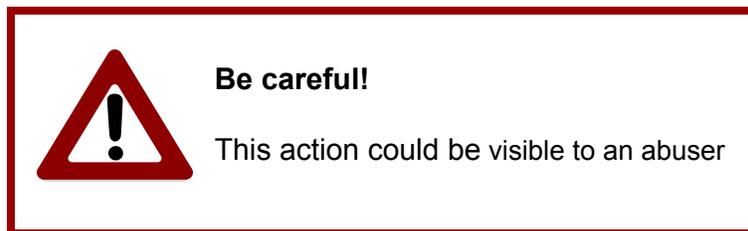
The following will appear:



If you click on **Clear data**, you will delete your browsing history and cookies (a type of online ID that the websites you visit can use to track and identify you). You can also click on **Advanced** to select the specific parts of your browsing history you want to delete:



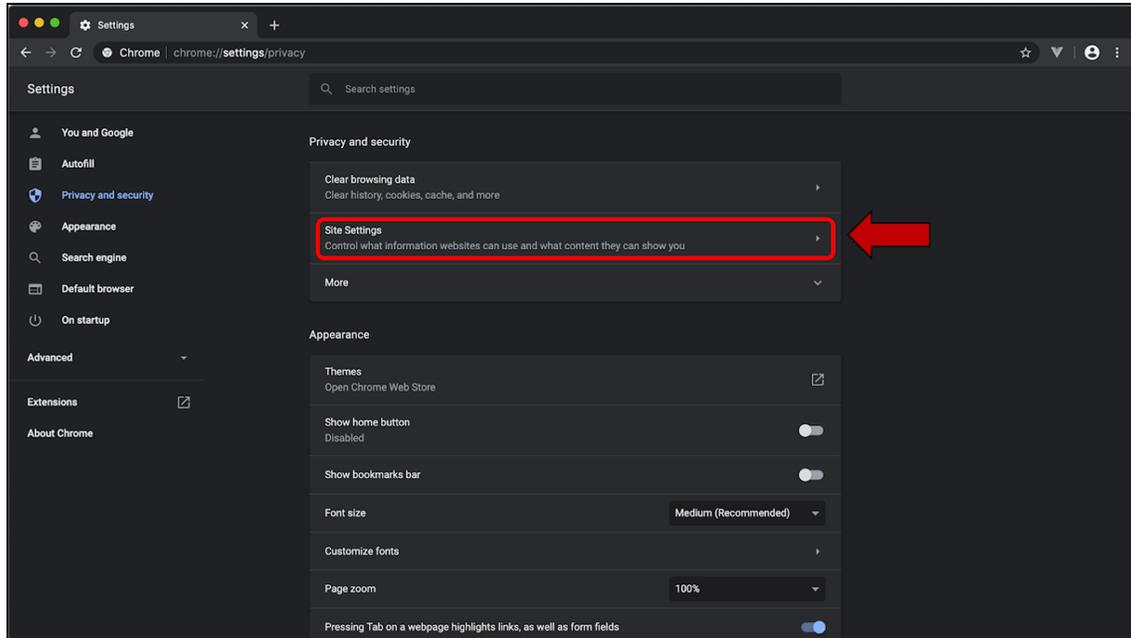
Notice that there is an item called **Passwords and other sign-in data**. If you click on the checkbox at the left of that item and then click on **Clear data**, this will delete your saved passwords (which an abuser could use to access your accounts through this browser).



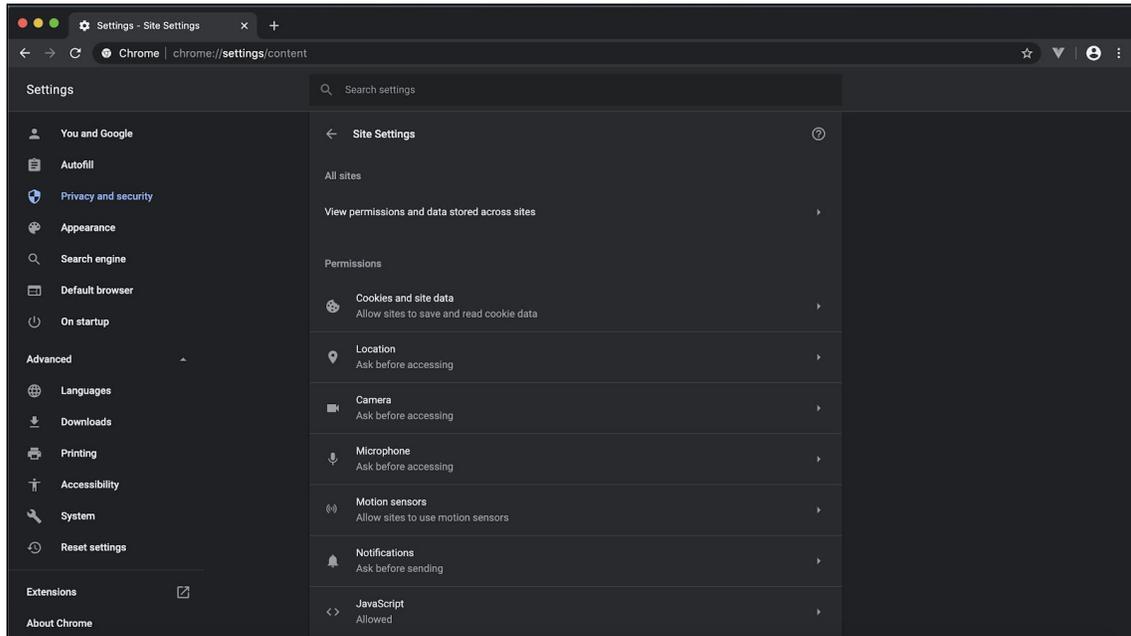
If the abuser is getting access to your online accounts with your saved passwords, they may know right away if you clear the data because they would have to enter the sign-in information and password to get access to your accounts.

We strongly recommend that you talk to a domestic violence or other appropriate organization to make plans for your safety before you clear data related to passwords and other sign-in data if you are worried about violence or threats.

Google Chrome's Privacy and security section also has an option called **Site Settings**. You can click on it if you're concerned that the abuser could open websites on your devices that could then use the microphone or camera to monitor you, or send information about your location:

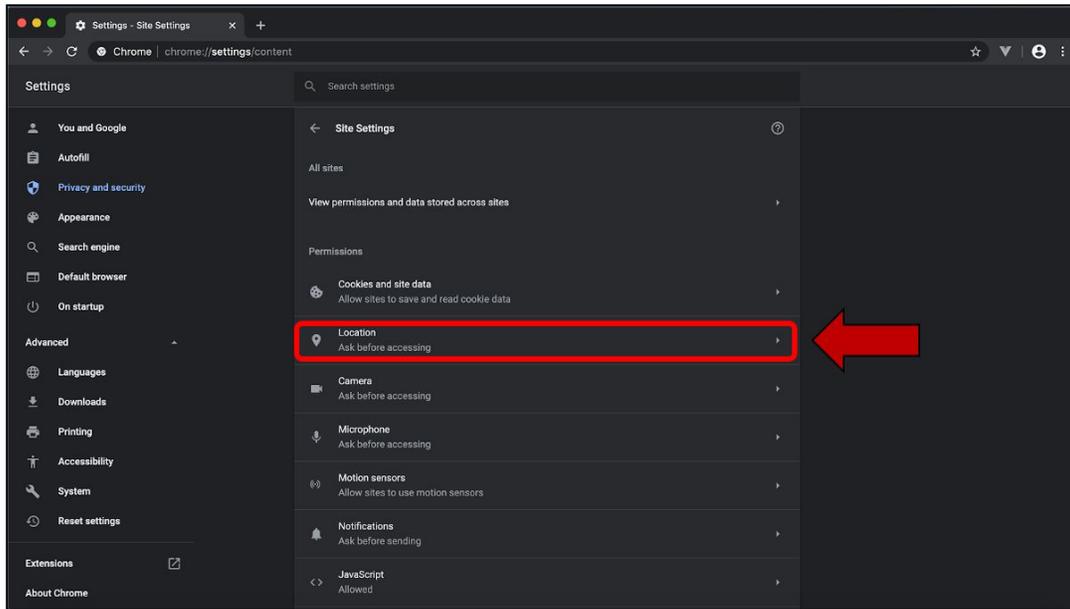


You will see something like this:

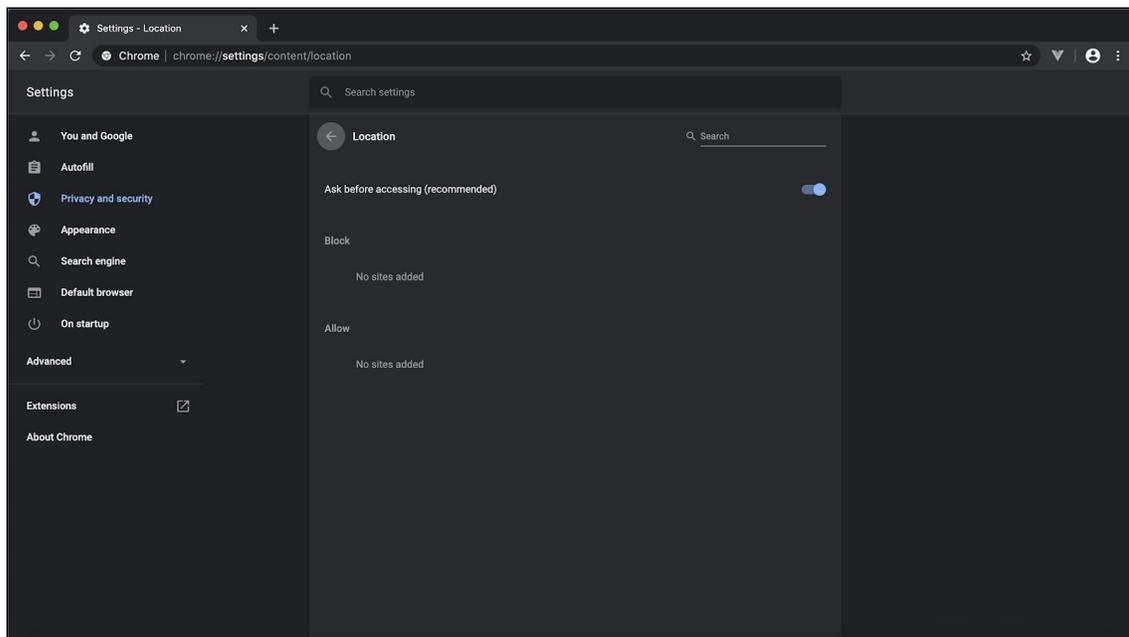


In this page, you can check whether the websites you visit have permission to get access to certain kinds of information about you. We recommend you to check the **Location**, **Camera**, and **Microphone** permissions, as an abuser could be using a hidden website to record your computer's audio and video or to track your location.

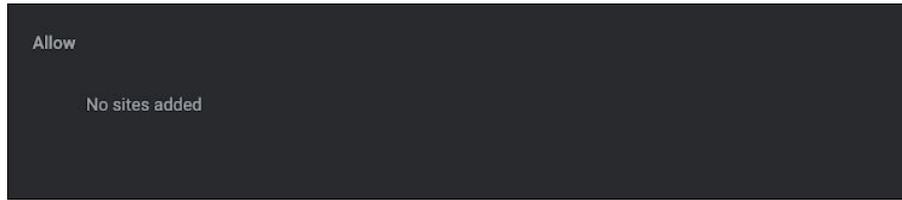
For example, if you want to check which websites have the permission to access your location, click on **Location**:



You will see something like this:



Check if you see a suspicious app under the **Allow** section:

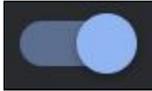


Also, check to see if **Ask before accessing** is turned on, since this can help protect you from surprise uses of your camera, microphone, or location:



If it is turned on, you will always be asked if you want a website you are visiting to have access to your location.

Remember:

	... means that the option is turned on
	... means that the option is turned off

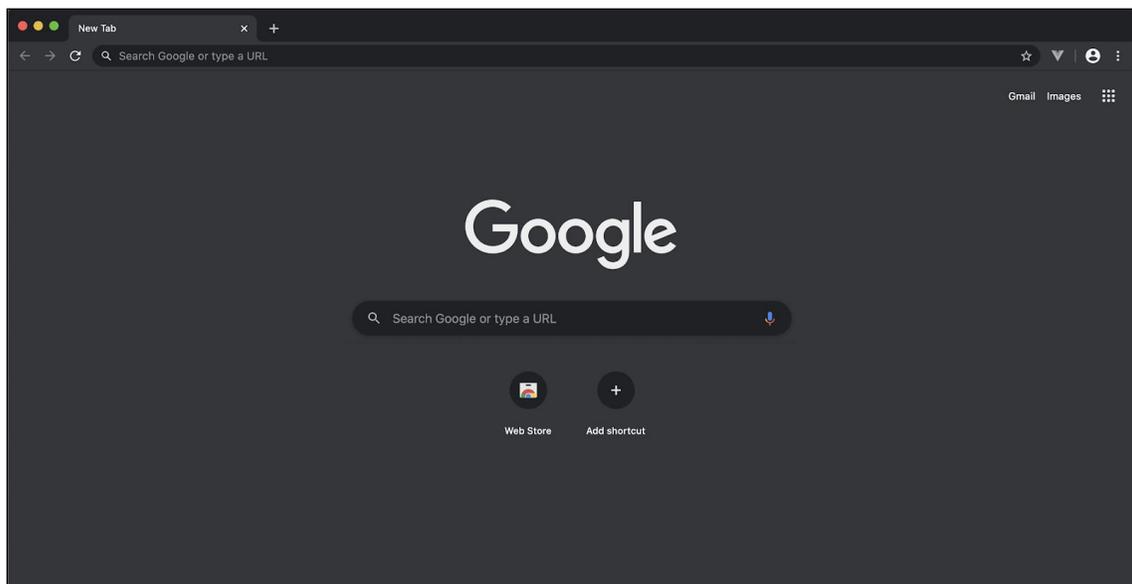
V. Checking if the Sync feature is on

The **Sync** Google Chrome feature syncs information such as bookmarks and extensions across all of your devices in which Google Chrome is installed. This could allow an abusive partner to get information about you from various devices. The Sync feature works if you are logged into your Google Account inside Google Chrome.

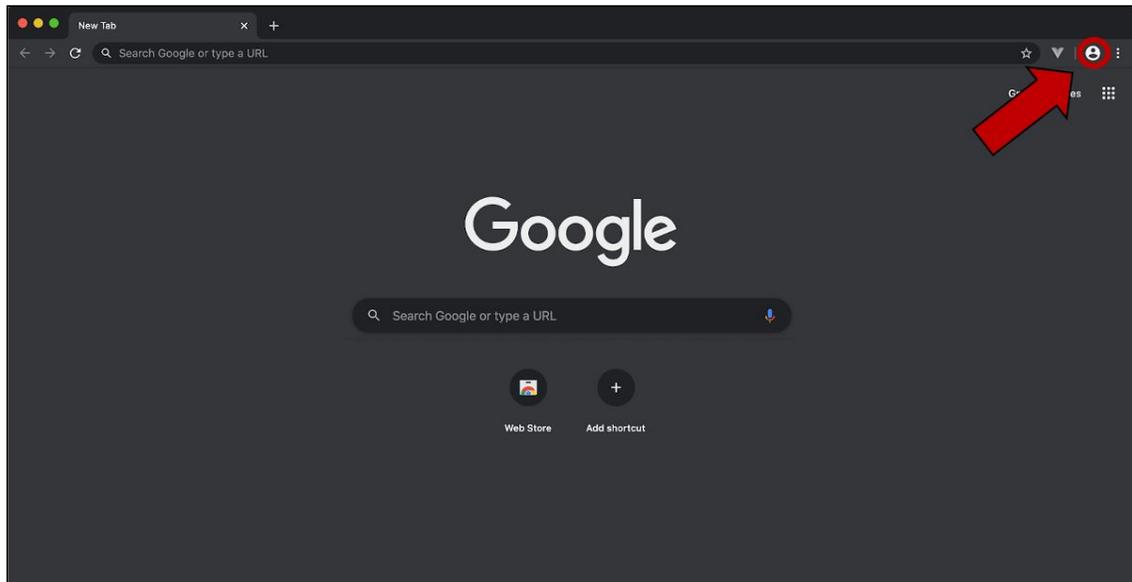
Open **Google Chrome** by clicking on its icon:



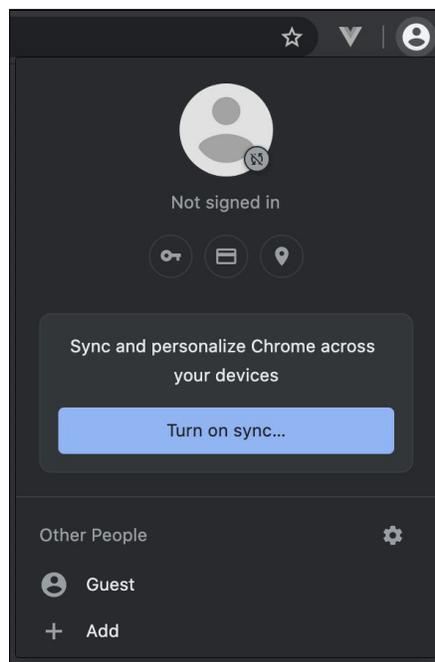
You will see something like this, often with a white background:



Click on the **Profile** button at the top right corner:



You will see something like this:



If you see a **Turn on sync...** button, that means the Sync option is off. If you see a **Turn off** button, that means the Sync option is on. Click on the **Turn off** button if you want to stop Chrome from syncing information about you (like bookmarks and extensions) across your devices.

For more details on the **Sync** feature, check the following Google guide:
<https://support.google.com/chrome/answer/185277?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en-GB>

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