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Troubleshooting VPN Connection Failures on Windows 11

Article Owner	IT Infrastructure & Security Team
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Applies To	All employees using company-issued Windows 11 devices
VPN Client	Cisco Secure Client (AnyConnect) v5.x
Related Article	How to Install the VPN Client on a New Device

Overview

This article helps you diagnose and resolve common VPN connection failures on Windows 11 devices.

Work through the steps in order, starting with the simplest checks before moving to more advanced fixes. If the issue persists after completing all steps, submit an IT support ticket with the diagnostic information listed at the end of this article.

Symptoms

This article applies if you are experiencing any of the following:

- Unable to connect to the VPN — connection attempt fails or times out
- VPN connects but disconnects within a few minutes
- Specific error codes when attempting to connect (see Error Code Reference below)
- VPN client opens but the Connect button is greyed out
- Connected to VPN but unable to access internal resources

Note: If your purchase is part of an existing contract or master services agreement, contact the Procurement team before submitting a new PR to avoid duplicate vendor records.

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Error Code Reference

Error Code	Likely Cause	Go To
Error 429	Too many simultaneous sessions	Tier 1, Step 3
Error 433	VPN license limit reached	Contact IT immediately
VPN-12271	Windows firewall blocking connection	Tier 2, Step 2
VPN-12029	Unable to reach VPN server	Tier 1, Step 1–2
Certificate Error	Expired or untrusted certificate	Tier 3, Step 1
Authentication Failed	Incorrect credentials or MFA issue	Tier 1, Step 3

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Troubleshooting Steps

Tier 1: Basic Checks (Start Here)

1. Verify your internet connection. Open a browser and confirm you can access an external site such as google.com. The VPN requires an active internet connection to function.
2. Restart the VPN client. Close Cisco Secure Client completely (check the system tray), wait 10 seconds, and reopen it.
3. Check your credentials and MFA. Ensure you are entering your current company password and approving the Duo or Authenticator push notification when prompted. If your password was recently changed, wait 15 minutes for it to sync across systems.
4. Restart your computer. A full system restart resolves many transient connection issues and should be completed before moving to Tier 2.

Tier 2: Intermediate Fixes

1. Check for VPN client updates. Open Cisco Secure Client, click the gear icon, and select Check for Updates. Install any available updates and retry the connection.
2. Temporarily disable Windows Firewall and retry the VPN connection. If the VPN connects successfully with the firewall off, a firewall rule is blocking the connection — contact IT to configure an exception rather than leaving the firewall disabled.
3. Check Windows Date and Time settings. VPN certificates can fail if your system clock is incorrect. Go to Settings > Time & Language > Date & Time and enable Set time automatically.
4. Flush the DNS cache. Open Command Prompt as Administrator and run: ipconfig /flushdns. Retry the connection after completion.

Tier 3: Advanced Steps

1. Reinstall the VPN client. Uninstall Cisco Secure Client via Settings > Apps, restart your computer, and reinstall using the package available on the IT self-service portal at it.yourcompany.com/vpn.
2. Check for conflicting VPN software. If you have another VPN client installed (e.g., for a personal or previous employer's use), it may interfere with the company VPN. Disable or uninstall it before retrying.
3. Review Windows Event Viewer logs. Open Event Viewer > Windows Logs > Application and filter for errors from "Cisco AnyConnect." Take a screenshot of any errors to include in your IT support ticket.

Warning: Do not share VPN credentials or diagnostic logs outside of official IT support channels. VPN configuration files may contain sensitive network information.

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If the Issue Remains Unresolved

1. Submit an IT support ticket and include the following information to help the team diagnose the issue faster:
2. Your device name and Windows build number (Settings > System > About)
3. The exact error code or error message displayed
4. The steps you have already completed from this article
5. A screenshot of the Event Viewer log entries (if completed Tier 3, Step 3)
6. The time and date when the issue first occurred

Contact and Escalation

1. IT Service Desk: helpdesk@company.com | #it-support on Slack | ext. 5000
2. Ticket Portal: it.yourcompany.com/tickets
3. After-hours critical support: it-oncall@company.com