



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by National Insurance Services



AI SELF-DIAGNOSIS MISTAKES TO AVOID

As artificial intelligence (AI) tools become more accessible and sophisticated, it's easy to turn to them for quick answers, including health-related questions. But while AI can be helpful for general information, health experts warn against using it to self-diagnose medical conditions, which can be very risky. For individuals juggling busy schedules, the temptation to rely on AI instead of seeing a health care provider is understandable, but it's a shortcut that could lead to serious consequences.

This article explores the risks of using AI for medical diagnoses and highlights common mistakes to avoid when using AI for health advice.

Risks of Using AI for Medical Diagnoses

AI platforms, including symptom checkers, health chatbots and even wearable tech, are designed to process large amounts of data and provide general insights. However, they are not trained medical professionals. They lack the ability to consider your complete medical history, understand the nuances of your symptoms or perform physical examinations. They are also prone to errors and disinformation. AI tools often rely on pattern recognition and publicly available data, which means they can miss critical details or offer overly broad suggestions.

For example, a headache could be interpreted by AI as anything from dehydration to a brain tumor without the context to differentiate between the two. This can lead to unnecessary panic or, worse, a false sense of security.

Only a licensed health care provider can accurately assess your symptoms, order appropriate tests and provide a diagnosis tailored to your unique situation.

AI Uses for Health and Wellness

If you choose to use AI for health-related information, it's important to proceed with caution and a clear understanding of its limitations. While AI can be a helpful tool for exploring health topics, it should never be considered a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. AI can support your curiosity and help you prepare for conversations with your doctor, but it should not be the final authority on decisions about your health.

That said, when used responsibly, AI can offer some benefits for learning about health and wellness. One of the most valuable uses is improving health care literacy. AI tools can help users better understand medical terminology, health conditions and treatment options, making it easier to engage in informed discussions with health care providers. Additionally, AI can assist in learning about common symptoms, which may help individuals determine whether they should seek medical attention or monitor their condition further.



AI can also serve as a powerful search tool to access information from reputable public health sources. When prompted correctly, it can guide users to trusted organizations, such as the Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic and Johns Hopkins. These sources provide accurate, evidence-based information that can help users make more informed decisions about their health.

Mistakes to Avoid When Using AI for Health Advice

While AI can be a useful supplement to your health research, it's essential to verify any information it provides with licensed medical professionals or trusted health organizations. AI should complement, not replace, professional medical guidance.

The following are some common mistakes to avoid when using AI for health advice:

- **Don't assume AI results are definitive.** AI can suggest possible conditions, but it cannot confirm a diagnosis.
- **Don't rely on AI for mental health care.** Some AI tools may sound empathetic or supportive, but they are not trained therapists or counselors. Mental health care requires human understanding, emotional nuance and professional guidance. If you're struggling, reach out to a licensed mental health provider or use employee assistance program (EAP) resources from your employer.
- **Don't enter vague or incomplete symptoms.** AI tools rely on the information you provide. If your input is unclear or incomplete, the results will likely be inaccurate or misleading.
- **Don't use AI to self-prescribe treatments.** Attempting to treat yourself based on AI suggestions can be dangerous. Medications, supplements and therapies should only be used under the guidance of a professional.
- **Don't forget to follow up with a doctor.** Even if AI suggests a minor issue, it's essential to confirm with a health care provider. What seems minor could be a sign of something more serious.
- **Don't rely on AI during emergencies.** In urgent situations, time is of the essence. Do not waste

valuable minutes consulting AI. Call emergency services or go to the nearest hospital.

What To Do Instead

When it comes to your health, there's no substitute for professional care. The following are some safer, more effective tips to use:

- **Schedule an appointment with a health care provider.** Whether in person or via telehealth, speaking with a licensed professional can help you get accurate, personalized care.
- **Use AI tools only for general education.** If you're curious about a condition or want to learn more about a diagnosis you've already received, AI can be a helpful supplement, but not a primary source.
- **Take advantage of employee health resources.** Many workplaces offer wellness programs, EAPs or access to virtual care that you can utilize.
- **Use reputable health sources.** For personal guidance of your health, nothing replaces the direction of a licensed health care provider. For general health information, it's important to rely on reputable sources such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins or other trusted public health organizations.

While AI tools can help summarize or explain health topics, they should never be used as a substitute for expert medical advice.

Conclusion

AI is transforming the way we access information, and when used wisely, it can be a helpful tool to increase health literacy. However, it's important to remember that AI is not a doctor; it cannot replace the training or experience of a licensed health care provider.

If you're dealing with physical symptoms, mental health concerns or just feeling off, make an appointment with a licensed health care provider.