

AI Use Decision Flowchart

AI USE DECISION FLOWCHART

Should I Use AI or See a Doctor?

START HERE: What do you want help with?

Follow this flowchart to determine whether AI is appropriate for your situation, or whether you need human medical care.

DECISION POINT 1: Do you have symptoms?

✓ **YES, I have symptoms**

Go to: Symptom Evaluation Path

✗ **NO, I don't have symptoms**

Go to: General Learning Path

SYMPTOM EVALUATION PATH

QUESTION: Are any of these true?

- Symptoms are on the Red Flags list
- Symptoms are severe or rapidly worsening
- You're worried this might be an emergency
- Your gut says something is seriously wrong

If ANY are checked:

→ CALL 911 or GO TO ER IMMEDIATELY

Do NOT use AI. Do NOT delay care.

Red flags include: chest pain, stroke symptoms, difficulty breathing, severe bleeding, altered consciousness, severe abdominal pain with fever, and many others. See Red Flags Quick Reference.

After you've called 911 or are heading to ER, you MAY use AI to prepare: - "I'm going to the ER for chest pain. What questions should I ask?" - "What information should I tell the ER doctor?"

QUESTION: Are symptoms concerning but not emergent?

Examples: - Persistent symptoms that aren't getting better - New symptoms you haven't experienced before - Symptoms that interfere with daily activities - Symptoms that worry you

If YES:

→ SCHEDULE DOCTOR APPOINTMENT

Then you MAY use AI to prepare:

- ✓ "What questions should I ask my doctor about [symptoms]?"
- ✓ "What information would help my doctor evaluate this?"
- ✓ "What are possible causes I should discuss with my doctor?"

Do NOT use AI to: ✗ Decide whether you need to see doctor
✗ Diagnose what's wrong
✗ Determine treatment
✗ Convince yourself not to go

QUESTION: Do symptoms need medical evaluation but you're trying to decide if you should go?

If YES:

→ THIS IS INAPPROPRIATE AI USE

AI cannot make triage decisions.

Default rule: When in doubt, see a doctor.

If you're reading this flowchart trying to decide if you should see a doctor, the answer is probably yes.

GENERAL LEARNING PATH

QUESTION: What do you want to learn about?

Option A: I was diagnosed with a condition

→ EXCELLENT AI USE CASE

Ask AI: ✓ "I was diagnosed with [condition]. Help me understand what this means."

- ✓ "What causes [diagnosed condition]?"
- ✓ "What lifestyle changes help [diagnosed condition]?"
- ✓ "What questions should I ask at my follow-up appointment?"

Your doctor diagnosed you. AI helps you understand it.

Option B: I was prescribed medication

→ EXCELLENT AI USE CASE

Ask AI: ✓ “I was prescribed [medication]. What is this and how does it work?”

- ✓ “What are common side effects of [medication]?”
- ✓ “Does [medication] interact with [other medications]?”
- ✓ “What should I watch for while taking [medication]?”

Your doctor prescribed it. AI helps you understand it.

Do NOT ask AI: ✗ “Should I take this medication?”

- ✗ “Can I change my dose?”
 - ✗ “Can I stop taking this?”
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Option C: I have test results

→ GOOD AI USE CASE

Ask AI: ✓ “What does this test measure?”

- ✓ “What’s the normal range?”
- ✓ “What do my values indicate?”
- ✓ “What questions should I ask my doctor about these results?”

Your doctor ordered tests. AI helps you understand results before your appointment to discuss them.

Do NOT use AI to: ✗ Diagnose based on results

- ✗ Decide treatment based on results
 - ✗ Determine if you need follow-up
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Option D: I saw my doctor and didn’t understand something

→ EXCELLENT AI USE CASE

Ask AI: ✓ “My doctor said [medical term]. What does that mean?”

- ✓ “I was told to [instruction]. How do I do that?”
- ✓ “What lifestyle changes help [diagnosed condition]?”

Your doctor gave you information. AI helps you understand it so you can follow through correctly.

Option E: I want to learn about health generally

→ EXCELLENT AI USE CASE

Ask AI: ✓ “How does [body system] work?”

- ✓ “What is [medical condition]?”
- ✓ “What are the benefits of [health behavior]?”
- ✓ “How do [medications/procedures] work?”

General health education with no personalized medical decisions.

Option F: I'm preparing for an upcoming appointment

→ EXCELLENT AI USE CASE

Ask AI: ✓ "What questions should I ask about [symptoms/condition]?"

✓ "What information should I track before my appointment?"

✓ "What tests might my doctor order?"

✓ "How should I describe my symptoms?"

Using AI to become a better-prepared patient leads to better doctor visits.

DECISION SUMMARY TABLE

Your Situation	Use AI?	See Doctor?
Emergency symptoms	NO - Call 911 first, then may use AI to prepare	YES - Immediately
Concerning symptoms	Maybe - Only to prepare for appointment	YES - Schedule soon
Trying to decide if symptoms need doctor	NO - This is inappropriate	YES - When in doubt, go
Want diagnosis for symptoms	NO - Dangerous use	YES - Required
Want treatment recommendation	NO - Dangerous use	YES - Required
Diagnosed condition - want to understand	YES - Excellent use	Follow doctor's plan
Prescribed medication - want to understand	YES - Excellent use	Follow doctor's plan
Have test results - want to understand	YES - Good use	Discuss with doctor
Didn't understand doctor's instructions	YES - Excellent use	Call office if still unclear
General health education	YES - Excellent use	Not needed
Preparing for appointment	YES - Excellent use	Keep appointment

THE GOLDEN RULES

✓ USE AI FOR:

- **Education** about diagnosed conditions
- **Understanding** prescribed medications
- **Preparation** for medical appointments
- **Clarification** of doctor's instructions
- **General learning** about health topics

- **Interpreting** your test results (then discuss with doctor)

✗ **DON'T USE AI FOR:**

- **Diagnosis** of symptoms
 - **Triage** decisions (whether to seek care)
 - **Treatment** decisions
 - **Medication** decisions (take, adjust, stop)
 - **Replacing** medical evaluation
 - **Dismissing** concerning symptoms
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THE ULTIMATE TEST

Ask yourself: "Am I using AI to..."

PREPARE for medical care? ✓ Appropriate use

AVOID medical care? ✗ Inappropriate and dangerous use

UNDERSTAND medical care I've received? ✓ Appropriate use

REPLACE medical care? ✗ Inappropriate and dangerous use

SPECIAL CASES

"AI said my symptoms are probably nothing"

This is NOT a green light to avoid seeing a doctor.

AI's reassurance is based on: - Statistical likelihood (not examining you) - Text description (missing physical findings) - Population averages (not your specific risk factors)

If you're worried, see a doctor. Your velociraptor brain might be detecting something AI cannot assess remotely.

"AI gave me a diagnosis"

AI diagnoses are not reliable.

AI cannot: - Examine you physically - Run tests - Distinguish between similar conditions - Assess severity - Consider your complete medical history

If AI diagnoses you, get actual medical evaluation to confirm.

"AI said I don't need to see a doctor"

AI cannot make this determination.

AI doesn't know: - Your complete medical history - Your risk factors - What examination findings would reveal - How sick you actually look

If you're considering seeing a doctor, default to going.

"Can I ask AI if my symptoms are an emergency?"

No. Call 911 if you're worried it's an emergency.

AI cannot assess emergency situations remotely. If you're asking this question, your concern level already suggests you should seek immediate care.

When in doubt about emergencies, err on the side of calling 911.

FINAL DECISION RULE

Still not sure? Use this simple test:

"Would I be comfortable with AI making this decision for my child or parent?"

If the answer is NO → See a doctor

If the answer is YES → AI may be appropriate for education/preparation

REMEMBER

AI is a tool for information, not a substitute for medical care.

Information to enhance human care ✓

Information to replace human care ✗

Print this flowchart. Refer to it every time you consider using AI for health questions.

**From: AI in the Exam Room - Patient Education Curriculum
Module 8: When AI Is Actually Helpful (Appropriate Use Cases)**