

The Five Essential Questions

THE FIVE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Ask These EVERY TIME You Consult AI About Health

Before trusting ANY AI medical advice, ask:

1. “What are you basing this on?”

What this reveals: Source quality and reliability

✓ **Good sign:** Specific, verifiable sources - “According to StatPearls peer-reviewed content...” - “Clinical guidelines from the American College of Cardiology...” - “FDA-approved prescribing information...”

✗ **Red flag:** Vague sourcing - “Studies show...” - “Research indicates...” - “Medical literature suggests...”

Action: If AI can’t provide verifiable sources, don’t trust the information.

2. “What can you NOT detect remotely?”

What this reveals: The sensing gap—what AI is missing

✓ **Good sign:** Specific list of examination findings - “I cannot detect fever, assess neurological function, palpate for tenderness...” - “Visual examination would reveal information about color, texture...” - “Vital signs require measurement...”

Critical: Compare this list to YOUR symptoms. If you have any red flags AI cannot detect, seek evaluation immediately.

This is the most important question. It has saved lives.

3. “What would require emergency evaluation?”

What this reveals: Red flags and escalation criteria

✓ **Good sign:** Specific, objective red flags - “Seek immediate care if you develop: [specific symptoms]” - “Go to ER immediately for: [clear criteria]”

✗ **Red flag:** Vague escalation - "See doctor if symptoms worsen" (Worsen = subjective) - "Seek care if concerned" (Concerned = subjective)

Action: Write down the red flags. Monitor for them. If ANY appear, escalate immediately.

4. "What are you uncertain about?"

What this reveals: Whether AI has humility or overconfidence

✓ **Good sign:** Honest uncertainty - "I'm uncertain about [specific aspect] because I lack [specific information]" - "The evidence on this is mixed/limited" - "I cannot distinguish between [conditions] without [examination/testing]"

✗ **Red flag:** Perfect confidence - "I'm certain this is..." - No acknowledgment of any uncertainty - "I'm very confident..."

Action: If AI expresses zero uncertainty about complex medical situations, be very skeptical.

5. "What should I ask my actual doctor?"

What this reveals: Whether AI understands need for human judgment

✓ **Good sign:** Specific questions for physician - "Ask your doctor: [list of relevant questions]" - "Your physician should assess: [specific examinations/tests]" - "Discuss with your doctor: [treatment options, risk factors, monitoring]"

✗ **Red flag:** Implies doctor unnecessary - "This is simple enough to manage on your own" - "You probably don't need to see a doctor"

Action: Use the questions AI suggests to prepare for your appointment.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS (Based on AI Response)

IF AI GIVES DIAGNOSIS:

- "How certain are you?"
- "What else could this be?"
- "What would change your assessment?"

IF AI RECOMMENDS TREATMENT:

- "What are the risks?"
- "How do I know if it's working?"
- "When should I see a doctor instead?"

IF AI SAYS DON'T WORRY:

- “What red flags should I watch for?”
 - “What would make this emergent?”
 - “What are you missing by not examining me?”
-

RESPONSE EVALUATION CHECKLIST

GREEN FLAGS (Good signs):

- Specific verifiable sources
- Explicit limitation acknowledgment
- Clear red flag criteria
- Recommends human evaluation when appropriate
- Expresses uncertainty about complex situations

RED FLAGS (Danger signs):

- Vague sourcing
- No mention of limitations
- Overconfident diagnosis
- Suggests no doctor needed
- Never says “I don’t know”

DECISION RULE:

- **4-5 green flags, 0-1 red flags** → May be useful (still verify)
 - **2-3 green flags, 2+ red flags** → Be very skeptical
 - **0-1 green flags, 3+ red flags** → Don’t trust this AI
-

WHEN TO STOP QUESTIONING AND ESCALATE

STOP using AI and call 911 if:

- Chest pain with associated symptoms
- Stroke symptoms (FAST: Face, Arm, Speech, Time)
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe bleeding
- Any symptom AI says requires emergency evaluation

STOP using AI and see doctor if:

- Symptoms meet red flags AI identified
 - You have symptoms AI says it cannot assess remotely
 - AI expresses significant uncertainty
 - Your gut says something is wrong (velociraptor test)
 - Symptoms persist or worsen despite AI advice
-

THE BOTTOM LINE

Good questions turn AI from dangerous to useful.

Ask them every time. Your life might depend on it.

Print this card. Keep it with you. Use it EVERY TIME you consult AI about health.

**From: AI in the Exam Room - Patient Education Curriculum
Module 7: Questions to Ask Your AI (That Might Save Your Life)**