AHIMA

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PATIENT AI EDUCATION

A patient's guide to artificial intelligence in healthcare.



INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become part of everyday healthcare, often working in the background where patients never see it. This guide explains where AI may appear in your care, how it affects your health information, and what questions you can ask. AI is a tool that supports your care team; it does not replace the judgment of your doctor, your nurse, or you. Caregivers supporting a family member will also find this guide useful.

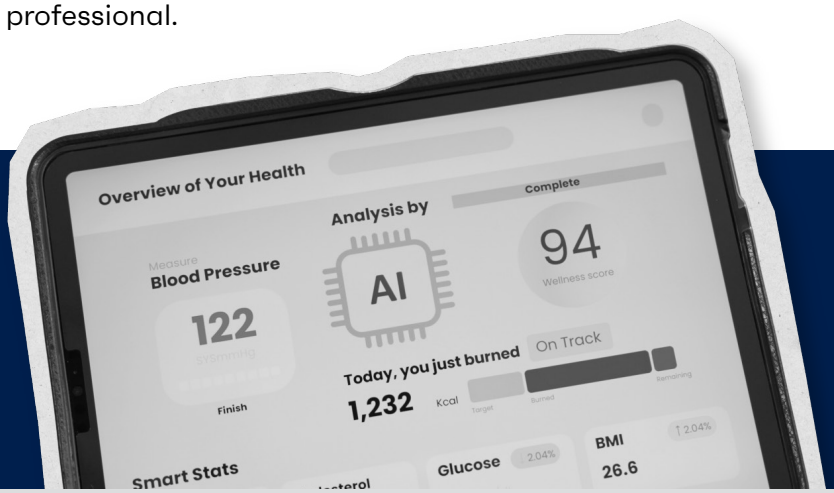
1 WHAT IS AI IN HEALTHCARE?

AI is not new. It has been around since the 1950s. AI is computer software that follows rules or learns from examples to analyze information. It can spot patterns, review lots of information quickly, help reduce mistakes, and find things that look unusual. AI does not think like a person. It works from patterns and instructions. Think of a calculator: fast and precise, but only as reliable as the numbers entered.

Where AI may be used in your care:

- **Medical imaging:** AI can help clinicians review X-rays, CT scans, MRIs, and other images, drawing attention to findings that are subtle, very small, or easily overlooked.
- **Early detection:** AI can identify patterns that may signal a disease in its earliest stages, allowing treatment to begin sooner.
- **Clinical decision support:** AI can suggest possible diagnoses, identify patients at higher risk for certain conditions, flag potential drug interactions, and recommend treatment options for your provider to consider.
- **Remote monitoring:** AI can analyze data from home devices, such as heart monitors, and alert your care team to changes that may need attention.
- **Patient portal messages:** Some organizations use chatbots, which are computer programs that respond to written questions, to answer frequent questions sent through the patient portal.
- **Clinical documentation:** Ambient listening tools capture the conversation during your visit and help your provider draft clinical notes.

AI is meant to support, not replace, human decision-making. Clinicians make the final decisions, drawing on experience and clinical instinct that AI cannot replicate. Understanding how AI is used helps you ask informed questions, recognize when an AI-generated answer needs a second look, and know when to consult a healthcare professional.



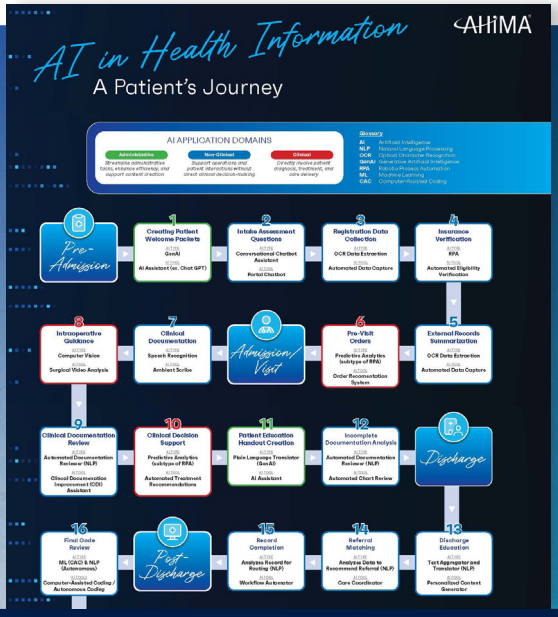
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2 WHERE AI APPEARS IN YOUR CARE

WHEN	HOW AI MAY BE USED	WHAT YOU CAN ASK
Before your visit	Portal or text messages for scheduling, sign-in forms, insurance checks, reminders, and questions about your symptoms.	Is a computer program handling my scheduling or sign-in? Who reads my answers?
During your visit	Tools that listen and help write notes. Tools that help your provider with diagnosis, treatment plans, and instructions for when you go home.	Will AI record my visit? Will my provider check the notes? Can I say no?
After your visit	Finalizing visit notes, processing billing and insurance claims, handling record requests, and coordinating ongoing care.	If AI was part of an insurance decision, how do I ask a person to review it?
Behind the scenes	Monitoring privacy and regulatory compliance, analyzing population health trends, and developing training materials.	Is my information used to train AI? How is my privacy protected?

This AHIMA infographic shows how AI can help at each step of your care, from check-in and visit notes to billing and after you go home. It also shows how people stay involved at every step.

View the full infographic: [AI in Health Information: A Patient's Journey Infographic]



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3 YOUR INFORMATION AND PRIVACY

Is my information safe when my care team uses AI?

Some states require providers to disclose when they use AI; if you are unsure, ask. The federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protects your health information and applies to most healthcare providers and to the vendors working on their behalf. You can ask whether the AI tools in use comply with HIPAA.

Strong safeguards include:

- **Encryption**, which scrambles information so unauthorized people cannot read it
- **Access limited** to authorized staff
- **Regular audits** to confirm compliance
- **A response plan** in case of a breach

In some cases, identifying details such as your name, date of birth, and address are removed (de-identified) before AI uses your information. You can ask whether the tool uses only the minimum information necessary.

What if the AI tool comes from an outside company?

Federal law requires any outside company handling your information on your provider's behalf to sign a Business Associate Agreement. This agreement obligates the company to protect your information to the same standard as your provider and to report any breach without unreasonable delay. You can ask your provider whether such an agreement is in place.

Do insurance companies use AI to deny payments?

Some insurance companies use AI to help process claims. If a service is denied, you can ask for an explanation. You also have the right to appeal, which means asking for the decision to be looked at again.

Using AI tools on your own

Information you enter into consumer AI apps and chatbots is generally not protected by HIPAA. Before sharing anything, ask yourself: "Would I be comfortable posting this publicly?" If not, leave it out.

- **In an emergency, call 911.** For a mental health crisis, call or text 988. Do not rely on an AI tool.
- **Never** share passwords, user IDs, prescription details, or your medical records.
- **Test results:** You may see results in your portal before your provider contacts you. Do not paste them into an AI tool. Ask your care team what they mean.
- **Emotional support:** AI chatbots are not trained counselors. If you are struggling, talk to a real person, like your provider or a mental health professional.
- **Ask general questions**, like "What are good ways to lower blood pressure?"
- **Check what you learn** with your care team or another trusted source.

Watch out for AI scams

Scammers increasingly use AI to impersonate voices and create convincing calls, emails, and texts that appear to come from your provider, pharmacy, or insurer. If a message requests personal or payment information, do not respond. Instead, contact the organization directly using a number you know is legitimate, such as the one on your insurance card or your provider's official website.

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4 QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

You have the right to access and obtain a copy of your medical record. Reviewing it works much like reviewing a bank statement: it helps you catch errors early and stay engaged in your care. Policies vary by organization, so ask your provider what applies to you.

BEFORE AND DURING YOUR VISIT

- Will AI be used to record or write notes about my visit?
- Can I choose not to be recorded?
- Will my provider check the AI notes before they go in my record?
- Can we go over my medicines, allergies, and health problems together?

AFTER YOUR VISIT

- When can I see my visit notes in the patient portal?
- If I find a mistake, how do I get it fixed?
- If my visit was recorded, how long is it kept? Who can see it?
- How can I get a copy of my medical record?

ABOUT AI TOOLS AND YOUR INFORMATION

- Does this tool connect to the internet? How is my information kept safe?
- How long is my information kept? How is it deleted?
- Does the tool save my information?
- Can only the staff caring for me see my information?

ABOUT PORTAL MESSAGES AND PRIVACY

- Did my provider write or check this message?
- Who do I contact if I have questions?
- Is my information used to improve AI?
- Where can I read about your privacy practices?



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5 BENEFITS AND LIMITS OF AI

HOW AI MAY HELP	WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND
• Faster answers to some frequent questions • More face-to-face time with your provider while AI helps write notes • Helps your provider look through a lot of information quickly to find the right diagnosis and treatment • Can spot things a person might miss, like something unexpected on an X-ray or scan that no one was looking for • May lower costs and wait times	• AI can produce inaccurate or misleading results. • Since AI learns from historical data, it may perform less accurately for certain populations. This is one reason human review of AI results is essential. • AI tools that translate languages can make mistakes. • AI notes can make mistakes. Ask your provider to fix them. • If a portal reply does not answer your question, ask for more information or a phone call. • Consumer AI apps lack access to your full health history. Talk to your provider about what you find. • Health apps should never replace visits with your provider.

6 KEY TERMS

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS
Protected Health Information (PHI)	Individually identifiable health information, such as diagnoses, test results, or billing records, that HIPAA protects
Business Associate Agreement	A signed agreement that makes an outside company protect your information
Ambient listening	Technology that captures the conversation during a visit and generates draft notes for the provider to review
Chatbot	A computer program that answers questions in writing
Encryption	Scrambling your information so the wrong people cannot read it



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7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION	ANSWER
Is AI making decisions about my care?	Your care team makes decisions about your care, with AI as a supporting tool. If you have questions about an insurance decision, see Section 3.
Will AI replace my doctor or nurse?	No. Your care team continues to rely on their training, experience, and clinical judgment.
Can I say no to AI tools during my care?	Often, yes, for tools that record your visit. Other AI tools, like those that help read scans or process billing, may be built into how care is given. Ask what applies to you.
Is my information safe?	Tools your care team uses must follow HIPAA. AI apps you use on your own usually do not. See Section 3.
What if I think AI made a mistake in my record?	Contact your provider and ask for a correction.
Does AI know my full medical history?	No. It only knows the information it has been given.
Was my portal message written by a person or AI?	It depends on your provider. AI may help write some messages. Ask your provider if a person checked it.
What happens to recordings from my visit?	Practices vary by provider and vendor. Some delete recordings once notes are finalized, while others keep them for a period of time. Ask your provider about their policy.

Where to Get Help:

- **Your care team:** Questions about your care, your visit notes, or how AI is used.
- **Your provider's privacy office:** Ask for their Notice of Privacy Practices, which explains how your information is used and shared.
- **Your insurance company:** Ask why a service was denied and how to appeal.
- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights:** If you think your health privacy rights were not respected, you can file a complaint at hhs.gov/ocr.

Conclusion

AI is already part of your care, and understanding it is the first step toward engaging with it confidently. You do not need to remember everything in this guide. Just remember that you can always ask. If something does not feel right, or your visit notes do not match what happened, speak up. Asking questions makes you an active partner in your care.

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