

Media Release

EMBARGOED until 16 February 2026

New research reveals AI has fundamentally changed the way Australians access health care

New research reveals that AI has become the “front door” to health information, a shift experts warn makes the role of medical professionals more critical than ever in protecting patient safety and health outcomes.

The report by Healius Pathology Network shows most Australians are now turning to online and AI-based tools as their first step when experiencing symptoms or researching possible diagnoses, often before consulting a healthcare professional.

While this offers speed and convenience, experts say it also increases the risk of misinformation, misdiagnosis and unnecessary anxiety, reinforcing the importance of seeing trusted healthcare professionals.

“This research helps us understand how Australians are navigating health information in a rapidly changing environment,” says Healius Pathology Network Chief Executive Officer, Paul Anderson.

“In an online landscape, where misinformation is rife, Australians can feel confident turning to their local pathology providers for accurate, medically sound and science-led information about their specific health concerns.”

The research found around half of all Australians report using AI to find health information, with six in ten admitting they have self-diagnosed using online information.

This represents a sharp shift since Healius’ 2024 report, at a time when AI was not yet a measured or meaningful source of health information.

This trend is particularly evident among parents, with those who have children living at home significantly more likely to turn to AI for health information.

For Sydney mum Annabelle, online health information has become a practical necessity when she needs a quick answer to health concerns about her children, aged four and one.

“Booking an appointment with a good, trusted doctor can sometimes take weeks, and the internet has answers within seconds,” Annabelle says.

“I usually just read the AI summary, but if I have time, I’ll look at the sites in more detail,” she said.

“These answers can ease your mind or prompt you to act quickly in an emergency.”

However, the 2025 report found that 78% of Australians express moderate or high trust in AI, with only one-third of users consistently verifying AI information by checking sources.

“While seeking information online offers convenience and accessibility, people should be wary that the information they receive may not be subject to the same standards as medical professionals, such as pathologists and GPs,” Mr Anderson says.

Annabelle says online research can help parents feel more confident when speaking to doctors, but it also

has clear limitations.

"I feel more informed and like I can more accurately explain to a doctor what I've already tried for my child," she said.

"But it's also easy to misdiagnose, and the internet can increase anxiety by making illnesses seem far worse than they are."

The dramatic rise in AI when seeking healthcare information should act as a warning for Australians to think carefully about who, and what, they trust. This is particularly true for younger adults, parents and First Nations Australians, who are disproportionately affected by misinformation-related harm.

"AI has accelerated a shift in how we access healthcare by offering information instantly and in an easily accessible way but it is always important to verify the information you source online," Mr Anderson said.

"The good news is that pathology results, healthcare professionals and pharmacists remain the cornerstone of trust. This is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of the healthcare workforce across Australia."

"The role of pathology as evidence-based healthcare is more important than ever before."

The report found:

- Online self-diagnosing rose to 59% in 2025, up from 53% in 2024.
- 98% of Australians trust pathology results, healthcare professionals and pharmacists for health advice and information.
- 47% of Australians only seek professional health advice after checking or researching online first.
- 78% of AI users report moderate or high trust in the source.
- Only one-third of users consistently verify AI information by checking sources, increasing exposure to misinformation or misinterpretation.
- 60% of Australians report that rising medical costs influence how often they seek professional care, with 35% making less appointments and finding information themselves.
- AI usage is highest among 18–44 year olds and parents with young children.
- Parents with children living at home are more likely to use AI compared to those without children living at home. This includes understanding symptoms (35%), treatment options (31%) and diagnosis (31%) as well as deciding whether to see a doctor or a specialist (17%).
- People who are likely to experience negative impacts from health misinformation include people who live in metro areas (35%), have dependents (44%), are university qualified (36%) and First Nations people (61%).

[**View the full report here**](#)

Media contact: Laura Downey, laura@89degreeseast.com, 0427 827 928