



# How AI Is Changing Podiatry: What Every Practice Needs to Know

This omnipresent technology is changing how patients choose a podiatrist.

BY SHAUN ZAKEN

## ***AI generated search results are transforming how patients choose podiatrists, often before they visit a single website.***

For many patients, finding a podiatrist typically begins with a quick Google search. They type “best podiatrist near me,” or a similar phrase, into their search engine, click on a few practice websites, and read a handful of reviews before deciding where to book an appointment.

While this process is still common, it is changing quickly. In fact, more patients are no longer clicking through to websites at all. Instead, they are met with AI generated summaries that provide direct answers about symptoms, treatment options, and even which providers to consider. For many, these summaries feel complete enough to give them the confidence to schedule an appointment directly from the search results, without doing any additional research. And let’s be honest, if patients feel like they already have the answer they need, they may be less inclined to spend extra time digging deeper. As AI continues to evolve and deliver reliable information, patients are likely to place even more trust in these results and feel less of a need to verify the details elsewhere.

This raises a critical question for podiatrists: if patients are getting their answers from AI before they ever reach your website, will your practice be part of their decision?

## **By the Numbers: How AI is Changing Patient Search**

### ***Patients are making decisions faster, with less website browsing, and AI is setting the stage.***

- 80 percent of consumers now rely on AI summaries for at least 40 percent of their searches (Bain & Company, 2025).
- 60 percent of searches end without the user clicking on any website.
- High intent searches such as “best podiatrist near me” are increasingly answered directly in AI summaries.
- Trust signals like detailed patient reviews and clear, structured content strongly influence which clinics AI highlights.

## **What This Means for Podiatrists**

### ***AI is compressing the time you have to make an impression with potential patients.***

AI summaries are not just delivering information. They are shaping perceptions. If another clinic is presented as the trusted choice for heel pain, bunions, or plantar fasciitis, that provider gains an immediate advantage before a patient ever sees your name.

This shift is redefining what it takes to stay visible. A polished website and strong reviews remain valuable, but they are no longer enough on their own. What matters now is whether AI recognizes your clinic as a credible and trustworthy source of answers to the questions patients are asking. For clinics that have relied

mainly on word of mouth or a website built years ago, the risk of being overlooked is greater than ever.

## **3 Major Changes in How Patients Find Care**

### ***Recognizing these changes is essential for staying visible when patients are making decisions.***

### ***Credibility is the new currency***

AI platforms prioritize information that appears reliable and trustworthy. Reviews that describe real outcomes, such as a patient walking pain-free after being fit for custom orthotics, carry far more weight than generic five-star praise. Adding professional credentials, showcasing board certifications, and highlighting your clinic’s track record of patient success strengthens your authority in the eyes of both AI and patients. Video content can also boost credibility. A short clip explaining treatment options or a patient sharing their recovery story provides authentic proof that builds trust with both search engines and prospective patients

### ***Patients are searching the way they speak***

More searches now sound like conversations. Instead of typing only “bunions treatment,” patients ask questions such as “How long before I can walk after bunion surgery?” or “Should my child see a podiatrist for flat feet?” Clinic websites that pro-

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vide clear, patient friendly answers to these kinds of everyday questions through blogs, FAQ pages, and service descriptions are more likely to appear in AI-generated summaries.

Success is no longer measured by clicks alone

With more searches ending directly on the results page, traditional metrics like pageviews do not reflect the full picture. Increasingly, an important measure of visibility is whether your practice appears in AI summaries and whether that presence is contributing to calls, inquiries, or booked appointments.

The AI Search Playbook for Podiatrists: Steps You Can Take Right Now

Practical ways to keep your clinic visible and trusted as

AI reshapes how patients search.

AI is no longer just answering symptom questions; it is shaping which clinics patients consider first. Some clinics already have a strong online presence, while others are still working to build or update theirs. Wherever your practice falls, these strategies can help ensure your clinic is recognized as both relevant and trustworthy.

1) Keep your profiles current and AI-ready

Claim your Google Business Profile(s) and update them regularly. Refresh photos, confirm office hours, add new services, link appointment scheduling, add your active social media platforms, and post updates or announcements. AI tools often prioritize profiles that appear active, complete, and consistently maintained.

2) Use simple video to showcase expertise

Video is now a powerful credibil-

ity signal, and it's easy to record on your phone if the subject is well lit and in a quiet space. A 15-45 second clip of a podiatrist explaining bunion surgery recovery or a patient sharing how a laser treatment helped them return to daily activities can go a long way. Post these videos on your website, Google Business Profile, and social platforms for maximum visibility.

3) Monitor how AI describes your field

Whether you are confident in your online presence or just starting to build it, it is important to consider what patients see. Search for common podiatry questions in Google's AI summaries or tools like ChatGPT. Pay attention to the language used, the accuracy of the information, and whether local providers are mentioned. This can highlight opportunities for your clinic to improve its visibility or clarify its expertise.

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4) Build local relevance into your content

Strengthen your connection to the community in ways AI can recognize. Mention your work with local athletes, community health programs, or your expertise treating conditions common in your area. Even adding references to your city and nearby neighborhoods in your online content can help AI match your clinic with local searches.

5) Track patient pathways, not just pageviews

Since more searches are ending on the results page, it's important to note that traffic data tells only part of the story. Ask new patients specifically how they found you online. Did they see your clinic in a Google summary? Did a particular review stand out? Consider adding this question to your intake forms or

follow-up calls so you can spot patterns over time.

Why Acting Now Matters

*The way patients look for care is changing quickly, and waiting too long to adapt can leave your practice behind.*

AI is no longer a future trend; it's already changing how patients choose their podiatrist. With 80 percent of consumers now relying on AI summaries for much of their searching, relying on word of mouth or an old website is no longer enough. Patients are making decisions about care before they ever visit a clinic's website.

This shift brings both risk and opportunity. Clinics that stay active, provide trustworthy content, and pay attention to how AI presents their field will be the ones patients notice first. Those who assume the old ways will carry them forward risk being invisible when patients are ready to choose a provider.

If keeping up with these changes feels overwhelming, you do not have to navigate them alone. The right guidance can help ensure your practice remains visible, credible, and the trusted choice for foot and ankle care in your community.

**So the real question is this: when someone in your community searches online for a podiatrist, will they find you? PM**



**Shaun Zaken** is the President and owner of Blue Orchid Marketing, Inc., a leader in podiatry marketing services for over 20 years. Blue Orchid Marketing specializes in providing top marketing solutions that actually work and help your practice grow, including email & SMS marketing, social media, SEO, websites, local listings, reputation management, print newsletters and postcards. Shaun can be reached at [Shaun@BlueOrchid-Marketing.com](mailto:Shaun@BlueOrchid-Marketing.com) or 203-746-5901.