People Are Using ChatGPT For Meal Planning — And Nutritionists Have Thoughts
Beth Krietsch | August 26, 2025

There's no doubt that a well-considered meal plan can help you eat healthier throughout the week and lighten the load of mealtime decision fatigue. But creating a weekly meal plan can be a lot of work, and hiring a nutritionist to do it for you can be expensive.

As in many aspects of life these days, some people are turning to AI to craft their meal plans as a bit of a shortcut. And while this might seem like a win-win scenario — it's fast, it's free and it's easy — is using AI for your meal planning actually a good idea?

To help parse this out, we reached out to registered dietitians to learn more about the potential perks and drawbacks of AI-generated meal planning, including whether this can be a reliable way to plan your meals in advance.

What is meal planning?

Meal planning is when you decide in advance what you're going to eat each week and draft a weekly menu and grocery list. Meal plans can take many different forms, but they're often personalized to meet nutritional needs, health goals, dietary preferences and budget constraints. It can be a helpful way to stick to a budget, save time, meet nutritional requirements and consolidate your food shopping into one trip.

You can create your own meal plan, use an app or hire a professional, such as a registered dietitian. Now, some people are also using AI.

Is it actually a good idea to use AI for meal planning?

AI can be a cost-effective and helpful starting point for people who are interested in incorporating meal planning and preparation in their routine, said Patricia Kolesa, a registered dietitian and founder of Dietitian Dish. "It provides a framework and structure for regular meal intake and incorporating certain foods or food groups into the diet that might have not been present before," Kolesa said.

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But she says AI probably shouldn't be the only tool you use. Working with a registered dietitian generally allows for a more holistic, targeted, flexible and individualized approach to meal planning.

"A meal plan is only one piece of the puzzle," Kolesa said. "When it comes to diet and nutrition, there are other areas like activity levels, stress management and eating behaviors that either further or delay you from meeting your nutrition goals. A meal plan does not take these factors into consideration the way a dietitian or nutrition professional will."

To help you better understand the nuances — including the importance of human judgment in meal planning — here are some of the perks and drawbacks of AI-generated meal plans, as explained by registered dietitians.

Benefits Of Using AI For Meal Planning

AI-based meal planning can be quick, cost-effective, and simple.

Accessibility

AI makes meal planning way more accessible, including among people who don't have access to a registered dietitian. "What was once only available through a dietitian or a paid membership program is now available to more people, often for free," said Violeta Morris, a registered dietitian at the Concierge Dietitian. This type of practical guidance can help drive meaningful changes in someone's approach to lifestyle and nutrition.

Convenience

Meal plans can help simplify your week, providing you with grocery lists, meal ideas and recipes. "AI can take some of the guesswork out of planning for the week and has the potential to provide new meal ideas," Kolesa said.

Simplicity

Using AI for meal planning is generally a whole lot simpler and quicker than creating your own meal plans and grocery lists and searching for recipes. "Using AI can help make meal planning easier and faster," said Melanie Crum, a registered dietitian and lead nutritional coach at POP Recovery Systems. "As a dietitian, I like it because it can save time and keep meals healthy and fun."

Drawbacks Of Using AI For Meal Planning

While the benefits of AI-based meal planning are enticing to many, nutritionists say there are also some potential downsides that are important to understand.

Plans Can Be Generic

AI-generated meal plans are generally far more generic than what you'll get when working with a registered dietitian. In some cases, this means you could see a lot of repetition in recommended foods and meals, "which can lead to burnout and stopping your plan entirely," Kolesa said.

And if you have a health condition, a generic, AI-generated meal plan might not meet certain nutrient requirements or health goals.

"AI can provide general guidance, but it can't offer the personalized, clinical recommendations needed — especially for individuals with medical conditions like diabetes or hypertension," Morris said. "These individuals have specific nutrient targets and require a level of understanding, context and human connection that only a dietitian or healthcare provider can provide."

There's A Tricky Learning Curve

Learning how to properly leverage AI for meal planning, such as understanding what details to include in your prompts, can be challenging.

"You need to know how to ask the right prompts or it might not give you the best plan," Crum said. "You have to tell it if you have allergies, foods you don't like, or how many calories you need. If you don't give clear info, the plan might not work for you."

It Can Be Restrictive

An AI-generated meal plan may be too restrictive and promote disordered eating behaviors without the user realizing it, Kolesa said. "Depending on how the user inputs information, the meal plan may remove certain food groups or lack the necessary nutrients to meet daily needs," she said.

And if you don't know how many calories your body needs, AI-generated recommendations could amount to more or less than you need. "A dietitian can help figure out how much food and what kind of nutrients you need based on your weight, height, activity level, and health goals," Crum said.

Potential Errors

You've likely heard about how AI can "hallucinate" and offer incorrect information. This can happen with AI meal planning, too. "Due to technical glitches, AI meal plans can overstate quantities or nutrition composition of certain foods as in total number of calories, grams of protein or grams of carbohydrates," Kolesa said.

If you have a medical condition, food restrictions or food allergies and intolerances, it's important to work with a dietitian for meal planning rather than solely relying on AI. You can include your restrictions and preferences in your prompt, but oversight from a dietitian is important in making sure the plan meets your health needs.

"A dietitian can provide personalized guidance on how to build balanced meals—like getting the right mix of carbs, protein, and fat — and offer the support and accountability that AI tools simply can't replace," Morris said.

Tips For Better AI For Meal Planning

- Provide as much detail as possible — food preferences, dietary restrictions, the foods you currently have on hand, macronutrient needs, and more. This can help in making your meal plan more individualized rather than generic.

- Ask AI to create a grocery list for you based on the meals it suggests for your weekly menu. "This has helped my clients immensely when taking that next step in putting the plan into action," Kolesa said.

- Review the plan closely to make sure it meets your specifications, including your nutrition needs and dietary restrictions.

- Have a registered dietitian review the meal plan and offer suggestions for swaps if needed based on your nutrition needs.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-use-chatgpt-for-meal-planning_l_68a482dfe4b0c2c76f8502a1