

5 Tips to Help You Manage 'Scanxiety'

For Cancer Patients, Anxiety About Scans
is the Rule Not the Exception

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| Is Scanxiety Real ?



The fight against cancer is just as emotional as it is physical. “Scanxiety”, while not an actual medical condition, is still a very real and emotional experience facing anyone who has received a cancer diagnosis. Whether ordered for diagnosis, to monitor treatment response, or to check for a recurrence – the anticipation of scan results can be all consuming.

It’s not surprising that these circumstances generate a sense of fear. Research shows that regardless of the feelings of hopefulness and positivity, it’s the overpowering fear of the unknown that feeds the anxiety. And let’s not forget that cancer survivors already have enough to worry about heading in for their requested scans. Naturally there’s anxiety about whether a CT, MRI, or colonoscope test will go well and that the desired results can be delivered quickly.



Taking a Closer Look at Scanxiety

By definition ‘scanxiety’ is anxiety and worry that a cancer patient feels before undergoing or receiving the results of a medical examination (such as MRI or CT scan). Despite the fact that nearly every patient will experience scanxiety, it’s surprisingly a topic that is rarely talked about between medical professionals and patients.

We know that navigating cancer is a stressful experience and expect feelings of angst to present itself at different points along the treatment journey. Anxiety is a natural human response; it’s the body’s physical “fight or flight” reaction to a possible threat and the symptoms can vary for each person. You may experience a racing or pounding heart, tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, upset stomach, sweating or tense muscles. Some patients might experience all of these symptoms while others might experience just one.

Alongside the body’s physical reactions, anxiety can also make you feel irritable, angry or apprehensive and constantly on high alert, anticipating danger. All of these signs indicate that our nervous system has been activated, and now your body is preparing to stand its ground and fight or take flight and run away from danger.

Why Do Image Scans Cause Scanxiety?

Now that you know a little bit more about scanxiety, it's important to remember that you are not the only patient experiencing these feelings. Scanxiety is a very real and expected reaction for someone in your situation so keep that in mind as you continue reading.

The reason that imaging tests cause so much anxiety for people who've experienced cancer is pretty obvious. Even for those who are wondering if they have or don't have cancer, the fear of cancer can be felt at a patient's core and can be impossible to ignore. Cancer isn't like other areas of our lives where we can make it go away if we try harder, or love more, or do more. There aren't many things in life that leave us feeling so vulnerable.



5 Tips to Help You Manage 'Scanxiety'

If you are a cancer patient, feeling anxious about an upcoming scan, it is important to remember that you are not alone and that there are ways to cope with the anticipation of your scan results.

01

Surround yourself with positive people who 'get it'

It's no secret that your outlook can change depending on the people you hang out with. Think about the people in your life that always seem to have a positive attitude, regardless of what life throws their way. These are people you can have a good time with and can go through tough times with as well. They are steadfast and available when you need them - but they aren't there to 'fix' things - they are there to provide you with moral support. At the same time, you also want to surround yourself with people who 'get it'. These can be other cancer patients that have been through what you're going through, or they are people without cancer who know how to be empathetic. Of course, there isn't anything either of these individuals can do, but just having someone around to talk to - alleviates the need to carry all of this anxiety around inside you.

02

Talk to your doctor about your concerns

You might think that your doctor already knows you're worried about your scan. And while it might be assumed that you're feeling anxious, you should still have a conversation about it - even just talking through it with someone you trust can be very helpful. It's also worth mentioning that your doctor has a lot of experience

helping cancer patients navigate many aspects of their cancer journey. It's totally acceptable to share what you're feeling - in most instances your doctor can answer your questions/address your concerns, refer you to a counselor or social worker who can help you prepare for your tests, they may even recommend some breathing exercises or meditation techniques to help you get through the process.

03

Be prepared: have a plan

You may be questioning what this means since you are prepared for your results, hence the anxiety. To clarify, this tip is about managing expectations and having a response plan based on the outcome of your test results. Depending on the news you receive, good or bad, it's important to be prepared to take next steps. Your plan should include a list of questions for your doctor, an overview and understanding of all your potential treatment options, and perhaps a list of additional specialists to share your results with.

Of course we are always hopeful that we will receive great news, it may help reduce your anxiety if you're ready to take immediate action if the scans are bad. Cancer makes you feel powerless. Having a plan in place can give back some feeling of control.

Here are some suggestions for Next Steps based on possible outcomes:

Result	Next Step
<p>You receive good test results! Great News!</p>	<p>Congratulations! Go and Celebrate!</p>
<p>You receive bad results... not great news.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request a copy of your test results (for your records) • Consider scheduling a call with a counselor or social worker who can help you emotionally deal with your results • Share the update with loved ones/family members as appropriate • Immediately schedule appointment with your doctor to discuss course of action. • Take 5-minutes to research, get clinically matched to and share all your available treatment options.

04

Reach out to help others

This tip may seem a little confusing, but sometimes, the best way to manage your own anxiety is to help out someone else who is struggling. Actually, any activity that you engage in will automatically redirect your mind away from your current feeling or situation. Instead of putting all your energy and focus into the anticipation of your cancer scan, why not reach out to others as a way to reset your attention to something else. You can help a neighbor, talk to a friend in need, shift the focus off of yourself for a while. It can be refreshing to worry about someone else for a change.

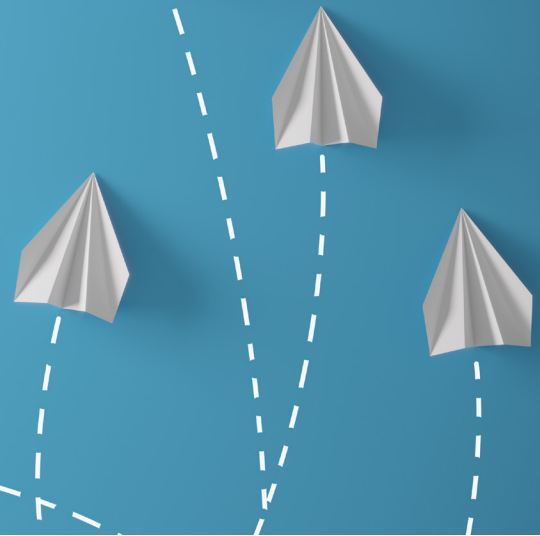
05

You don't have to go it alone

It's important to remember that you are not alone. Whether a friend, family member, caregiver, advocate or social worker, there is always someone to support you along your cancer journey. Having someone you trust either with you when you receive your test results or just a phone call away to speak with after you receive your results, can be a true life line. Per Tip #1 it's critical to surround yourself with positive people who can keep you moving in a positive direction.

Conclusion

Be Prepared - Know All Your Options



Whether newly diagnosed with cancer or waiting to receive your 5-year scan results, having a plan of action in place can be life-changing. And perhaps the most critical element of that plan is a comprehensive understanding of all your available treatment options.

In the past, it was always the oncologist driving the discussion about treatment. The doctor recommended a course of treatment, and the patient followed the doctor's orders. And why not? We trust our doctors and they know what's best for us. No one has more knowledge about every available cancer treatment, right? You might want to keep reading.

Doctors are, and will continue to play, a critical role when it comes to cancer treatment. However, as their bandwidth continues to decrease, it is unrealistic to assume that your doctor has full knowledge of every treatment or active clinical trial and which is the best fit for each patient.

Limited doctor bandwidth and life in a post-COVID world, has made patients, like you, more proactive when it comes to researching their indication. As a result they

are better educated and feel empowered to take a more collaborative approach with their doctor when it comes to making decisions about their treatment.

TrialJectory is a decision-making tool that clinically matches cancer patients to clinical trials in 5-minutes! Like you, a cancer patient or caregiver completes a dynamic questionnaire and hits submit. Almost immediately, the patient receives an email that includes a list of trials, including all relevant background information, in an easy-to-understand format that can be downloaded and shared with an oncologist prior-to or during their next visit.

The speed and level of accuracy Trialjectory uses to clinically match cancer patients to trials helps enroll more cancer patients into clinical trials and simultaneously moves the science of oncology forward.

Help spread the word about Trialjectory within your network. Share your experience using the platform - inform other cancer patients who are eager to take a more active role in their treatment journey.

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