

Coping with “scanxiety” and understanding results

We know that the period approaching a scan, undergoing the scan and then awaiting the results can be times of considerable anxiety for patients. If you suffer with “scanxiety”, you are not alone. One study has shown that 83% of people with NSCLC experience at least some kind of distress around having scans.¹

To help you overcome scanxiety, we’ve gathered the best insights, hints and tips we can find, many adapted from **Lindsay Brookshier’s blog on Stupid Cancer** at www.blog.stupidcancer.org/coping-with-scanxiety-b062cc9204a5

Try to schedule scans on days that work best for you. If possible, try to avoid having scans and getting results on a day where you are also going to work, or have another important commitment. Make the scan your priority so that you don’t need to worry about other factors at the same time.

Take a friend or relative with you. While it may feel like an intensely personal and private time, opening up and sharing how you feel with a trusted friend or relative can help you manage your anxiety. Having somebody with you for emotional support can be a big help.

Find techniques to help manage your anxiety.

If worrying about your scans is causing you such severe anxiety that it is affecting your day-to-day life, speak to your healthcare team or primary care physician. They may be able to offer you support and advice, refer you to counselling services, or possibly provide prescriptions for anxiety-relief medication (be sure to tell them if you are taking any other medications at the same time).

Alternatively, you might be able to practice other relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness, yoga, or exercise – if you have something that works to help manage your anxiety, stick with it.

Understanding your scan results

Once you’ve had your scan and/or tests, you may need a separate appointment to get the results after they have been interpreted by an expert radiologist or biochemist and shared with your oncologist.

These appointments can sometimes feel a bit confusing, especially if you are learning complex information. Some questions that may help you learn as much as possible about your results are below. It may be helpful to write these down, and bring something to take notes with (or ask a friend or family member to help you). You can also ask the doctor if they would mind if you audio-recorded the conversation for your own use.

- How do the results of this scan/test compare to my last one and what does this mean for me?
- Has treatment had an effect on my cancer?
- What are my next treatment steps based on these results?
- Will there be any follow-up tests from this? Scans or otherwise?
- Should I make any lifestyle changes based on these results?
- If I have follow-up questions after today, whom can I contact?

NSCLC, non-small cell lung cancer

References:

1. Bauml JM et al. Lung Cancer 2016; 100: 110–113.