



Top 10 Ways to Deal with MRI Anxiety

For patients the thought of having an MRI is a nail-biting and anxiety provoking experience. All new MRI installations are now designed with patient comfort in mind, and that includes dealing with what has come to be known as claustrophobic anxiety.

If you or someone you want to help is having an MRI, here are some excellent ideas:

1. Be proactive – call ahead find out if the MRI center has a “wide-bore” (sometimes called an “open-bore” by the manufacturer) scanner and ask to be scanned on that unit if possible. These tunnel units have extra face-space and elbow room.
2. Be even more proactive and ask if you can visit first. Some MRI centres welcome patients beforehand. Seeing the MRI environment will de-mystify the whole experience and result in reduced anxiety.
3. Relaxing music. Many facilities have MRI compatible sound equipment. Call ahead to find out if your center does and then take a CD of our favorite relaxing music with you.
4. Ask for a face cloth or sleep mask to put over your eyes at the time of your test. All MRI centres will oblige you.
5. Use a relaxation technique or use guided mental imagery. Imagine yourself at a favorite beach or engaging in some other soothing activity.
6. Ask the MRI Technologist conducting your test if you can go in feet first. Although not always possible, it may prove helpful because your head doesn’t have to slide through the scanner.
7. Drugs. Ask your physician beforehand to prescribe something to help relax you. If you choose this route, you must bring someone to drive you.
8. Bring a friend and ask if they can go into the scanner suite with you. This anxiety reducing strategy works well and done at the discretion of the Technologist conducting your scan.
9. If truly unable to go through with it, consider a fully open-design MRI. Although few and far between a few do exist such as a walk-in or sit-in unit (in B.C.) or flat-bed open scanners (mostly in the U.S. now). Some Google research will help.
10. The person conducting your test is a Technologist, well versed in the art of making you comfortable. Ask for their suggestions at the time of your test.