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Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada Information Sheets are provided as an informational and educational tool and are not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute for medical care. We urge you to seek specific medical advice on individual matters of concern.

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada is generously supported by individuals, corporations and employee groups. It is through the tireless dedication of donors that help is available for anyone affected by a brain tumour, including patients, survivors and their loved ones.

# Ask the Expert Information Sheet

## Scanxiety....is it real?

*By: Kelly Boileau*

Some people might assume that after someone has endured treatment for a brain tumour, undergoing a follow up scan such as an MRI or CT scan would be easy. For many this cannot be farther from the truth.

Anxiety is normal, but when emotions take over your life and affect the quality of your care this becomes detrimental; this is called Scanxiety. If there is anything true about brain tumours, it is the unpredictability about what is coming next.

Scanxiety can be overwhelming. It can cause patients to delay scans and other critical parts of their brain tumour treatment or post treatment plan. Scanxiety can cause intrusive thoughts, irritability, feelings of helplessness and fear. It can interfere with sleep, social functioning and work. Scanxiety can be overwhelming and can profoundly affect the quality of your life.

For those affected by brain tumour diagnosis, there is a love/hate relationship with diagnostic imaging. Often these scans save lives but at the same time can cause a lot of anxiety. Scans can be a reminder of the unpredictability of what comes next.

### How can scanxiety affect your life?

- Do you put off major decisions until your scan is over?
- Do you feel like you only have months of freedom in-between scan appointments?
- Do you feel as if a time clock restarts after every scan?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, here are some tips to reduce scanxiety:

- Distract yourself with music, books, special treats, a good friend.
- Before your appointment, surround yourself with people who put you at ease.
- Practice meditation or mindfulness prior to appointments and during your appointments.

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you are **not** alone

**Additional support, information and education offered by Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada:**

Adult, Pediatric and Non-Malignant Brain Tumour Handbooks available in English and French.

"A Friend in Hope" children's storybook available in English and French.

20+ Adult Support Groups across Canada (in-person and virtual)

Toll-free information and support line

BrainWAVE Pediatric Support Program

Print BrainStorm Newsletter  
Email Newsletters:

- E-BrainStorm
- Peace of Mind

"Grey Matters" Blog

- Practice breathing.
- Schedule your scan early in the day if possible.
- Schedule a follow up appointment at the same time to discuss results. Knowing you have a booked time to receive results will help manage your feelings of anxiety
- Expect to wait during your appointments; prepare by bringing something that will distract you (i.e.) a book to read, colouring book, your favourite magazine, knitting, music to listen to etc.
- Talk to your health care team about what would be most helpful during and after the scan.
- Spend time with a child. Kids tend to live in the moment and this can remind you not to focus on past experiences.
- Perform a random act of kindness.
- Talk to you doctor about medication to assist with anxiety.

Caregivers, family members and parents should not be forgotten. This population can experience scanxiety just as frequently and as profoundly as those receiving scans. Your life and those that you care for has been forever changed by a brain tumour diagnosis.

**Author:**

**Kelly Boileau** is the Brain Tumour Clinic Nurse Coordinator in the Brain Tumour Clinic at IWK in Halifax, NS. Kelly is a Health Care Professional Ambassador for Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada and was a 2016 recipient of the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada Professional Development Grant.

All patient resources are available free-of-charge in Canada. Call 1-800-265-5106 or visit [www.BrainTumour.ca](http://www.BrainTumour.ca) for additional details and information.



205 Horton St E  
Suite 203  
London, Ontario  
N6B 1K7

T 519.642.7755  
1 [800] 265.5106  
F 519.642.7192  
[www.braintumour.ca](http://www.braintumour.ca)

