



American College  
of Radiology™

ACR Toolkit to Reduce  
Patient Scanxiety

# What Is Scanxiety?

Scanxiety is an uneasy feeling patients get related to imaging examinations and procedures. It is a combination of nerves and anxiety which can become overwhelming, including feelings of panic and depression for some. Scanxiety can occur at any stage of patient interaction with practices that provide medical imaging, including scheduling, undergoing the procedure, awaiting results and receiving health news.

**Medical imaging providers can help reduce patients' scanxiety. Below are examples of how they can work with their practices to implement programs and make resources available to reduce scanxiety.**

## **Steps Medical Imaging Providers Can Take to Reduce Patients' Scanxiety:**

- 1** Ensure your practice communicates well with patients (in the office, online and on the phone) and creates a friendly and comfortable environment. Train staff to properly explain the upcoming examination to patients, including why it's necessary.
- 2** Have resources available for patients in the office, on the patient portal and practice website, such as:
  - Pamphlets, webpages, videos and graphics that describe common imaging examinations and contrast agents/radiopharmaceuticals so patients can better understand and be prepared for their examination. Examples are:
    - ▶ [ACR® Scanxiety portal](#)
    - ▶ [RadiologyInfo.org](#) exam-specific and [Scanxiety](#) webpages
    - ▶ [The Joint Commission's Speak Up Graphic for Medical Imaging](#)
  - ACR Patient-Friendly video [Scanxiety—Imaging Exam Anxiety](#), which explains scanxiety to patients and ways to reduce it
  - Social media hashtags such as #scanxiety to help patients connect with one another and share experiences
  - Articles written by patients talking about how they overcome scanxiety
  - A journal in waiting rooms with a note inviting patients to write to other patients about what they are experiencing. This act of shared journaling can have a powerful impact.

- 3** Patient-facing communications and resources (written, spoken, print and video formats), including consent forms, should be in simple language (no more than 6th grade reading level), culturally competent and available in languages spoken by the patient population.
- 4** Promote a calming atmosphere:
  - Ensure a clean and comfortable environment
  - Have calming pictures/paintings
  - Provide patients with access to ear plugs, blankets and music
- 5** Enable your organization's electronic messaging system to allow patients to ask examination-specific questions through the patient portal directly to department personnel, including technologists and imaging providers.
- 6** Implement an online results communication program that allows patients to discuss their results with medical imaging providers. Add an "Ask the Imaging Provider a Question" link on the test results page of the patient portal and develop workflow for them to respond to patient questions. Referring physicians can stay in the loop with viewing access to the imaging providers' messaging system where they can view patient questions and the imaging providers' responses.
- 7** Implement a virtual consultation program that allows imaging providers to attend patients' appointments with their primary care providers (whether it be virtually or in person) to discuss their imaging results. The practice should use secure virtual meeting software for the consultations.

Reducing scanxiety is in all our interests. If patients avoid imaging examinations or procedures, the patients and their care teams will have incomplete information about patients' health status which may jeopardize their diagnosis, treatment and outcome.



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## Stay in touch with us.

Let us know what you are doing in your practice to help patients reduce scanxiety and/or if you have questions about implementing programs mentioned above, reach out to [PFCC@acr.org](mailto:PFCC@acr.org).

## Acknowledgements

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