

Steadying The What-Ifs: Scanxiety Support Toolkit

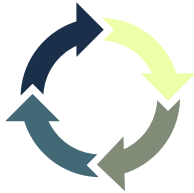
Your go-to pack of calming techniques, checklists, and lived insights for when scanxiety feels heavy.



"It's okay to worry. Having a scan means you're looking after your health."

Feeling nervous before, during or after a medical scan is very common. Many people call this "scanxiety." These feelings are normal, and there are simple, evidence-based tools that can help.

When Scanxiety Can Show Up



- **Weeks before the scan:** some people feel background worry as soon as the appointment is booked.
- **Days before the scan:** feelings often intensify as the date gets closer.
- **The night before or morning of:** anxiety can peak, sometimes leading to poor sleep or feeling "on edge."
- **During and after the scan:** waiting in the clinic or waiting for results can be especially stressful.

How to Recognise Scanxiety

Everyone experiences scanxiety differently. Signs may include:



- **Physical feelings:** racing heart, tense muscles, upset stomach, trouble sleeping
- **Thoughts:** constant "what if" worries, imagining worst-case scenarios
- **Emotions:** irritability, restlessness, dread, sadness
- **Behaviour:** avoiding appointments, struggling to concentrate, feeling on edge in the waiting room

In-the-Moment Soothers

If you notice these signs, try one or more of these quick steps:



- **Grounding:** focus on your senses — name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste
- **Breathing:** slow, steady breaths (try 4-4-4 breathing)
- **Movement:** gentle stretching, walking, or rolling your shoulders
- **Distraction:** music, puzzles, or a calming app
- **Connection:** send a text or call someone who understands

Simple Coping Tools to Prepare for your Scan (Clinician-backed)

The Night Before Your Scan



- **Prepare your bag and outfit early:** choose comfortable clothes and pack essentials so you're not rushing in the morning.
- **Limit your caffeine and alcohol intake:** too much can make sleep harder and heighten anxious feelings.
- **Use a calming bedtime routine:** try a warm shower, gentle stretching, reading, or listening to soothing music before sleep.

On the Day of Your Scan



Quick strategies if anxiety rises:

- **In the waiting room:** bring a distraction like a podcast, puzzle, or favourite playlist. Try these grounding tips.
- **Affirmations:** repeat simple phrases such as *"I am safe, I am cared for, I am doing the right thing for my health."*
- **Calming exercises:** try "box of square breathing"
 - Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4, breathe out for 4.
 - Even 2–3 rounds can calm your body.

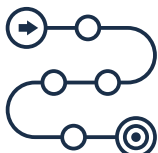
Practical Checklists

Things to Bring to Your Scan



- **Notebook or phone** for jotting down questions or reminders
- **Headphones or entertainment** to help pass time calmly
- **Water and a light snack** for afterwards (if allowed)
- **A support person** if possible (friend, partner, family member)
- **A comfort item:** jumper, scarf, small charm, or anything that feels grounding

Things to Consider in Advance



- **Travel:** appointments can sometimes take longer than expected. To take the stress out of parking, consider public transport or asking a friend or family member for a lift.
- **Afterwards:** arrange something positive, e.g. a coffee, walk, or your favourite meal
- **Connection:** ask someone to check in with you later in the day, especially if results are weighing on your mind

Lived Insights: From People Who've Been There



*I bring a friend with me.
It makes the waiting feel easier.*



*I plan a treat after my appointment,
even if it's just takeaway dinner.*



*I always book my scan early in the morning,
so I don't spend the whole day worrying.*



*I try to line up all my appointments in the same
month. That way, I can focus on them, then
step back and not have them hanging over me.*



*I text a friend who understands, even a heart
emoji from them helps me feel less alone.*



*I remind myself: having a scan is a step
towards looking after my health."*

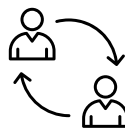
If It Feels Too Much

It's normal to worry, but if your feelings are constant, overwhelming,
or affecting daily life, please know support is available.

ICA Support



**Inherited Cancer
Support Service**



**Peer Support
Program**



**ICA National Online
Support Groups**

Other Support Pathways

- **Your GP:** ask about a mental health care plan
- **Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20:** confidential information and support
- **Beyond Blue 1300 224 636:** mental health support line and online chat
- **Lifeline 13 11 14:** 24/7 crisis support if things feel overwhelming
- **13YARN 13 92 76:** 24/7 support line run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporters