

1. You Can Wear Your PJ's To Your MRI

It's a cramped little tube that's super loud and gives you news that will make or break your day. On top of that, you can't move- even a little bit - or it will last a really long time.

MRI's are not so fun.

Even if you're like me and practically fall asleep during the scan, it's still something I would rather not do. Here are a few things that make it a little more comfy.

Wear your own clothes. Yes - this is possible IF AND ONLY IF you make extra special care that NOTHING is metal. No underwire bras, no lettering or anything reflective on your clothes (a hidden source of metallic no-no's), no zippers or brads around drawstrings. Pick an outfit that you know has NO metal at all, and keep it as your MRI gear. For me it's worth it to not change into a gown.

Bring your own tunes. You will probably have to burn a CD, but it's so worth it. Think relaxing music - nothing that makes you want to move. Favorites for me are India Arie, or trans/spa/ yoga music. Have a radio station you like as well because they may not be able to play a CD for you. I suggest something musical as you may not be able to hear words that clearly. It's a bit loud in there and you will have earplugs, but having that backdrop of calming music can really help.

Have a small towel to put over your eyes. The techs may have one there for you. Just like at the spa, having a towel across your eyes will help you keep them closed. This both helps you to get relaxed (there's nothing soothing about your eyes darting around the little tube) and it helps the MRI because moving your eyes a lot may effect the image and result in a scan do-over.

Ask the tech to countdown your time (or not). For me, it helps to know how much longer there is (are we there yet?). For others, it doesn't help at all. Play around with this to see which option works for you. Then make sure you tell the tech what you prefer.

Your objectives for MRI's are most likely 1. Get out as quickly as possible 2. Be as comfy as possible.

The techs want the same thing for you (let them worry about getting a good scan).

Do yourself a favor and optimize your MRI's. Learn what makes your MRI most comfortable and let the techs know. You will have many of these, and getting a system that works will make your MRI go much smoother.

2. The Key To Getting All Your Questions Answered

You are diagnosed and Bam! - you now have 1,000 points of data to keep track of. Ok - it may just seem that way. But there is a lot.

If you take one thing away from this guide, let it be this:

You are your biggest and best advocate. Everywhere, all the time.
Not your doctor or even your Mother - you.

One way to make this job as easy as possible is to plan ahead. You don't have to create a spreadsheet or anything (unless that's your thing) but start thinking about questions ahead of time to avoid rushing and missing information when it's important.

Create a list of questions for your doctor. I have a notes section on my phone where I write my questions as they come up even months ahead of time. Then I just enter the answers below as I ask them. This way you're not searching for a question while you're on the spot.

Check them off as you ask - and make sure they're all answered. During your visit, there will be tangents, and new things to think about, and...Squirrel! Keep going back to that list and make sure it's all answered to your satisfaction. Go back over questions if you think you don't fully understand the answer. If you don't know the information well enough to explain it to someone else, ask for more clarity.

An Advisory Committee member can really work for you here. I'll talk more about this in the next video. If you have someone you trust, bring them with you. Having another set of ears can really help. I didn't have this when I was first diagnosed and was afraid to ask someone. I wish I had. Now, the Hubs comes with me and it's really interesting to hear his take on the visit versus mine. (It's a lot less dramatic.) If you don't feel comfortable bringing someone, use a voice memo to record what your doctor says (be polite- ask first).

Super bonus organizing points - create a file with all your correspondence. Your questions, answers, dates, emails, MRI results. This will become a long-term account that can be really helpful to you in the future.