



## **MRI Information for Patients Who Experience Claustrophobia**

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### **What is claustrophobia?**

Claustrophobia is defined as a fear of enclosed spaces. To most people this translates to a feeling of anxiety or panic (from a level of "just a little anxiety" to severe panic), when in a small or confined area. In MRI, the enclosed space is the inside of the magnet machine. Many individuals who suffer from claustrophobia may require medication to relieve or reduce their anxiety ("sedation") in order to have the MRI successfully performed.

### **What medication is recommended?**

At UVa, we recommend Xanax®. It is a drug used widely for panic attacks. Valium may also be given. However, it is less successful than Xanax®.

### **Where will I get the medication?**

If you will require sedation for the MRI, inform your doctor at the time the appointment is made. Radiology will then give you an appointment time, when a radiology staff member will be available to sedate you. Upon your arrival at MRI, your level of claustrophobia will be assessed prior to your scan. Medication will be given to you by mouth to adequately sedate you for the scan. **DO NOT BRING SEDATION MEDICATION WITH YOU.**

### **What must I do to prepare for sedation?**

- Arrive in radiology 1 hour prior to your appointment.
- Bring someone to drive you home. **YOU WILL NOT BE GIVEN SEDATION IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A DRIVER OR SOMEONE TO PICK YOU UP.**
- Do not eat any solid food or drink any milk 3 hours prior to arrival at the hospital.
- You may drink clear liquids up to 2 hours prior to arrival at the hospital.
- Clear Liquids include Jello®, soda and coffee without caffeine, and juice that you can hold up to the light and see through. No orange juice.
- Take nothing by mouth for the last 2 hours prior to your arrival at the hospital.
- No caffeine 3 hours prior to arrival at the hospital.
- **DO NOT SMOKE FOR 3 HOURS** prior to arrival at the hospital. The nicotine in cigarettes will make you more difficult to sedate.
- Do not take diuretic or asthma medicine 3 hours prior to arrival at the hospital.
- Again, you will need a driver.

### **What happens after I receive the sedation?**

After you are given the sedation medication, you will be placed on a stretcher in a quiet area. The lights will be dimmed. A staff member will check on you periodically to measure the effect of the medication. It may take 30 to 60 minutes for the medicine to sedate you. If you require additional medicine, after the initial dose, the MRI staff will assess your level of need and give you more medicine. You may or may not go to sleep. However, your level of anxiety will be greatly reduced. You will be placed on the MRI table when you feel able to tolerate the scan.

### **What happens after the test?**

You will be discharged into the care of your driver. If you are very sleepy, you will be allowed to remain in MRI until you feel ready to leave.

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We welcome the opportunity to serve you. Thank you!

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<http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/radiology/mri/mri-patient-info-claustrophobia.cfm>