

My CT Scan Week Survival Checklist

A simple day by day guide to help you reduce scanxiety before your CT scan and while waiting for results.

By Wayne Schlicht

Stage 4 Cancer Survivor

A Personal Note from Wayne Schlicht, a Stage Four Cancer Survivor

If you're reading this, there's a good chance you have a CT scan coming up. First, I want you to know that you're not alone.

As someone living with stage four cancer, I've learned that the days leading up to a scan can sometimes be harder than the scan itself. Cancer patients even have a name for it, scanxiety. It's that feeling of uncertainty that creeps into your thoughts as you wonder what the images might reveal.

I've experienced that anxiety more times than I can count.

After undergoing seventy radiation treatments, chemotherapy, a radical neck dissection, immunotherapy, and countless CT scans, I know what it's like to wait for the phone call or the appointment that could change everything. I've celebrated scans that showed my cancer shrinking, and I've faced scans that brought difficult news. Every time, the waiting has tested my faith, my patience, and my emotions.

Another challenge I've encountered is the patient health records portal. Like many cancer patients, I've received a notification that my CT scan results were available before meeting with my oncologist. Seeing that notification can immediately raise my anxiety. Reading a radiology report filled with unfamiliar medical terms, measurements, and clinical language without someone there to explain it can easily lead to fear and worst case thinking. Over time, I've learned that those reports are written for medical professionals, and only my oncologist can interpret what the findings actually mean in the context of my treatment, my previous scans, and my overall health.

Over time, I realized I couldn't control the scan results.

What I could control was how I prepared for scan week.

I developed a simple routine that helped me stay grounded. Instead of allowing fear to consume every day leading up to my appointment, I focused on the things I could do, staying organized, taking care of my body, spending time with the people I love, praying, and reminding myself that worrying wouldn't change the outcome.

That routine became this checklist.

This guide isn't medical advice, and it won't eliminate every anxious thought. But my hope is that it gives you a practical plan to follow, helping you replace some of the uncertainty with purpose and peace.

No matter what your upcoming scan reveals, remember this:

A CT scan doesn't change your cancer. It simply gives your medical team the information they need to make the best decisions for your care.

Take one day at a time.

One appointment at a time.

One breath at a time.

Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your journey. I sincerely hope this checklist brings you comfort and encouragement during scan week.

Wayne Schlicht

Stage 4 Cancer Survivor

Author, Still Here: How Faith, Food, and Family Helped Me Fight Stage 4 Cancer

Seven Days Before Your CT Scan

A week before my CT scan, I try to shift my focus from worrying about what I can't control to preparing for what I can. Having a simple plan helps me feel more organized and gives me something productive to focus on instead of letting anxiety take over.

Use this checklist to begin preparing for your upcoming scan.

My Seven Day Checklist

- ☐ Confirm the date, time, and location of your CT scan.
- ☐ Review any preparation instructions, including whether you need to fast or arrive early.
- ☐ Verify if blood work is required before your appointment.
- ☐ Add your scan, follow up appointment, and any lab work to your calendar.
- ☐ Arrange transportation if you'll be receiving medication that could affect your ability to drive.
- ☐ Begin drinking plenty of water each day, unless your medical team has advised otherwise.

- ☐ Refill any prescriptions so you won't have to worry about running out during scan week.
- ☐ Write down any questions you want to ask your oncologist after the scan.
- ☐ Schedule something enjoyable after your appointment, such as lunch with a friend, time with family, or another activity that gives you something positive to look forward to.
- ☐ Limit time spent searching the internet for worst case scenarios. Every cancer journey is unique, and online stories rarely reflect your individual situation.
- ☐ If prayer, meditation, or journaling is part of your routine, make time for it each day this week.

My Reminder for Today

As I've gone through many CT scans, I've learned that preparation brings far more peace than worry ever does.

I cannot change what the scan will show.

I can choose how I prepare.

Today, I choose to take care of myself, trust my medical team, and focus on what I can control.

"Worry does not change tomorrow's outcome. It only steals today's peace."

Take one step at a time. One day at a time. You're closer to answers than you were yesterday.

Three Days Before Your CT Scan

With only a few days remaining, it's natural for scanxiety to become more noticeable. You may find yourself thinking about the upcoming scan more often or wondering what the results will show. I've experienced those same thoughts many times.

When I notice my mind drifting toward "what if" questions, I gently redirect my attention to the present. The goal isn't to ignore your emotions. It's to avoid letting fear consume the days before your appointment.

This is a good time to focus on caring for your body and maintaining as much of your normal routine as possible.

My Three Day Checklist

- ☐ Continue eating nutritious meals and stay well hydrated.
- ☐ Get a good night's sleep each evening. Rest is one of the best ways to prepare both physically and emotionally.

- ☐ Take a walk, exercise, or stay active if your health allows. Even light activity can help reduce stress.
- ☐ Continue taking your medications exactly as prescribed.
- ☐ Spend time outdoors if possible. Fresh air and sunshine can help clear your mind and improve your mood.
- ☐ Stay connected with family or friends. You don't have to carry the weight of scan week alone.
- ☐ Write down any new symptoms or questions so you can discuss them with your oncologist.
- ☐ Continue working, reading, gardening, or enjoying hobbies that keep your mind engaged.
- ☐ Limit social media and internet searches that increase fear or compare your journey with someone else's.
- ☐ If you belong to a church or support group, don't hesitate to ask for prayers or encouragement.
- ☐ Take a few minutes to practice slow, deep breathing whenever anxiety begins to build.

My Reminder for Today

I've learned that my imagination is often far worse than reality.

Some of the scans I feared the most ended up bringing good news. Others brought challenges, but they also gave my doctors the information they needed to adjust my treatment.

Either way, worrying ahead of time never changed the outcome.

Today, I choose to live today instead of trying to live through tomorrow.

"Don't let the uncertainty of tomorrow prevent you from finding peace today."

You have already shown incredible strength by making it this far. Trust yourself, trust your medical team, and take the next step one day at a time.

CT Scan Day

Today is the day.

If you're feeling nervous, anxious, or even overwhelmed, know that those feelings are completely understandable. No matter how many CT scans I've had, I still feel a little anxious on scan day. That's simply part of living with cancer.

What helps me most is remembering why I'm here.

The purpose of today's scan isn't to create fear. It's to give my medical team the information they need to make the best decisions for my care. Whatever the results may be, the scan itself doesn't change my cancer. It simply provides a clearer picture of what's already there.

Rather than focusing on what I can't control, I try to stay present and take the day one step at a time.

My Scan Day Checklist

- ☐ Review your appointment time and allow extra time for traffic and parking.
- ☐ Bring your insurance card, photo ID, and any paperwork requested by the imaging center.
- ☐ Follow all preparation instructions from your healthcare team, including fasting or drinking water if required.
- ☐ Wear comfortable clothing. You may be asked to change into a gown depending on the type of CT scan.
- ☐ Bring headphones, a book, or something to help pass the time if there is a wait.
- ☐ Continue drinking water if your instructions allow.
- ☐ Let the CT technologist know if you have concerns about the procedure or the contrast injection. They are there to help.
- ☐ If you receive contrast dye, follow the technologist's instructions carefully and continue drinking water afterward unless told otherwise.
- ☐ Take several slow, deep breaths before your scan begins.
- ☐ Remember that the actual CT scan usually takes only a few minutes.

During the Scan

As the scanner moves around you, try to relax your shoulders and breathe normally unless instructed to hold your breath.

If your mind begins to race, silently remind yourself:

"Right now, I am safe."

"This scan is helping my doctors care for me."

"I only need to get through the next few minutes."

Before you know it, the scan will be over.

My Reminder for Today

Every CT scan represents another opportunity to understand what's happening inside my body and make informed decisions about my treatment.

I've learned that courage doesn't mean I'm free from fear.

It means I keep moving forward even when I feel afraid.

Today, my job is simple.

Show up.

Take a deep breath.

Complete the scan.

Then let my medical team do what they do best.

"One appointment does not define my future. It is simply one step in my journey."

When today's scan is finished, be proud of yourself. You faced something difficult, and you did it anyway.

Waiting for Results

For me, waiting for the results can be the hardest part of the entire CT scan process.

The scan is over. There is nothing left to prepare for and nothing left to do. Now you wait.

And that's when the mind can start racing.

What if the cancer has grown?

What if they found something new?

What if my treatment isn't working?

What happens next?

I've asked myself these questions many times.

The difficult lesson I've learned is that worrying about the results doesn't change them. It only takes away the time I have today.

So while I'm waiting, I make a deliberate effort to keep living my life.

My Waiting for Results Checklist

☐ Resist the temptation to constantly refresh your patient portal.

- ☐ Spend time with people who make you feel supported and grounded.
- ☐ Get outside, take a walk, or exercise if you're able.
- ☐ Watch a favorite movie or television show.
- ☐ Read, listen to music, work on a hobby, or find something that occupies your mind.
- ☐ Pray, meditate, or journal when your thoughts become overwhelming.
- ☐ Avoid repeatedly searching symptoms or survival statistics online.
- ☐ Remind yourself that someone else's cancer story isn't necessarily your cancer story.
- ☐ Write down questions as they come to you so you're prepared when you meet with your oncologist.
- ☐ Give yourself permission to have moments when you're afraid. Then bring yourself back to today.

When the Results Hit Your Patient Portal

Modern patient portals have created another challenge that previous generations of cancer patients didn't necessarily experience.

Sometimes the results arrive before the doctor does.

Your phone buzzes.

“New test result available.”

Suddenly, you're faced with a decision.

Do I open it?

I know that feeling.

You click the notification and suddenly you're staring at a radiology report filled with measurements, medical terminology, comparisons, and unfamiliar words.

Then you find one sentence that sounds frightening.

You read it again.

And again.

Before long, you're searching the terminology online and imagining what it might mean.

I've learned to be careful about doing this.

A radiology report isn't the same thing as a conversation with my oncologist. The radiologist describes what appears on the images, but my oncologist can explain those findings in the context of my previous scans, treatment history, symptoms, and overall condition.

Sometimes a frightening sounding phrase isn't nearly as significant as I imagined.

That's why I've developed a simple question I ask myself before opening my results:

"Will knowing this information right now help me, or will it create anxiety that I can't resolve until I speak with my oncologist?"

There isn't a right answer.

Some people feel better knowing immediately.

Others would rather wait.

I've done both.

The important thing is recognizing that you have a choice.

You don't have to open that notification simply because it appeared on your phone.

If You Decide to Read Your Results

- ☐ Read the report once before reacting to individual words or phrases.
- ☐ Write down anything you don't understand.
- ☐ Avoid immediately assuming unfamiliar terminology means bad news.
- ☐ Don't compare your report with someone else's results online.
- ☐ Save your questions for your oncology appointment.
- ☐ Remind yourself that your oncologist still needs to interpret these findings within the context of your overall health and treatment.

And then, if you can, close the portal.

Go back to living your day.

My Reminder for Today

Cancer has already demanded enough of my time.

I don't want to voluntarily give it the hours, days, and moments between my appointments too.

I've learned that I can't control when the results arrive.

I can't control what they say.

And I can't control what happens next.

But I can control what I do with today.

"Until I know differently, I will not allow fear to write the ending of a story that hasn't happened yet."

The answers will come.

Until then, keep living.

Using Artificial Intelligence as a Learning Tool

One of the most helpful resources I've discovered during my cancer journey has been artificial intelligence, or AI.

Like many cancer patients, I accumulated hundreds of pages of medical information over time, including CT scan reports, PET scans, blood work, pathology reports, physician notes, treatment summaries, and medication lists. It became increasingly difficult to remember everything or understand how one report connected to another.

I began using AI to organize my medical information and help me better understand my records.

For example, I've uploaded my laboratory results, physician notes, pathology reports, and imaging reports into an AI assistant. I also created a reusable prompt that explains my medical history and instructs the AI to answer questions using my complete medical timeline as context.

The result has been incredibly helpful.

Instead of reading a CT report filled with unfamiliar medical terminology, I can ask questions such as:

"Can you explain this report in plain English?"

"How does this compare to my previous CT scan?"

"Which findings are new?"

"What questions should I ask my oncologist?"

"Can you summarize the changes since my last scan?"

By the time I meet with my oncologist, I have a much better understanding of my report and I'm prepared to have a more informed conversation.

AI has also helped me identify trends in my lab work, organize my treatment history, explain medical terminology, and summarize lengthy physician notes into language that's much easier to understand.

A Word of Caution

While AI can be an excellent educational tool, it is not a doctor and should never replace your healthcare team.

AI can misunderstand information, make mistakes, or provide incomplete answers. It doesn't examine you, know every detail of your condition, or make treatment decisions.

Always discuss your scan results, treatment options, and medical questions with your oncologist or healthcare provider before making decisions about your care.

Privacy is another important consideration.

Before uploading any medical records to an AI platform, take time to understand its privacy policy and how your information may be stored or used. Consider removing personal identifiers such as your name, address, date of birth, medical record number, and other identifying information whenever possible.

My Personal Perspective

For me, AI has never replaced my oncologist.

Instead, it has helped me become a better informed patient.

It has reduced some of the anxiety that comes from reading complex medical reports, helped me prepare thoughtful questions before appointments, and given me a clearer understanding of my cancer journey.

Used wisely, AI can be a powerful learning tool.

Used carelessly, it can also create confusion or unnecessary concern.

Like any tool, its value depends on how you use it.

"The more informed I became, the more meaningful my conversations with my oncologist became. AI didn't replace those conversations. It helped me prepare for them."

Questions for My Oncologist

One of the best pieces of advice I can offer is this:

Don't rely on your memory during your appointment.

Whether the news is encouraging or disappointing, emotions can make it difficult to remember everything you wanted to ask. I keep a running list of questions before every appointment so I can focus on the conversation instead of trying to think of questions in the moment.

There are no “bad” questions. Your oncologist wants you to understand your condition, your treatment, and your options. If something isn't clear, ask for an explanation in plain language.

Use the space below to write your own questions, and consider adding some of these if they apply to your situation.

Questions About My CT Scan

- ☐ Has my cancer improved, remained stable, or progressed?
- ☐ How does this scan compare to my previous scan?
- ☐ Were all known tumors measured?
- ☐ Did any tumors grow or shrink?
- ☐ Are there any new areas of concern?
- ☐ Is there anything on the report that is not related to my cancer but should be monitored?

Questions About My Treatment

- ☐ Is my current treatment still working?
- ☐ Should we continue with the current treatment plan?
- ☐ Are there any changes you recommend?
- ☐ What side effects should I watch for before my next appointment?
- ☐ Are there additional treatment options available if my cancer changes?
- ☐ Should I consider a clinical trial?

Questions About My Overall Health

- ☐ Are my recent blood test results concerning?
- ☐ Are there lifestyle changes that could improve my health during treatment?
- ☐ Are there any symptoms that should prompt me to call your office immediately?
- ☐ Is there anything I should avoid before my next visit?

Questions About What's Next

- ☐ When will my next CT scan be?
- ☐ When is my next follow up appointment?
- ☐ Do I need additional imaging or blood work?
- ☐ What should I expect over the next few months?
- ☐ What are our goals before my next appointment?

My Questions

My Reminder for Today

I've learned that the goal of my appointment isn't simply to hear the scan results. It's to leave with a clear understanding of where I stand and what comes next.

If I don't understand something, I ask.

If I forget something, I write it down.

If I need clarification, I ask again.

This is my health, and it's okay to take an active role in my care.

"Knowledge doesn't eliminate uncertainty, but it often replaces fear with understanding."

When your appointment is over, you'll leave with something you didn't have before you walked in, a clearer picture of your journey and a plan for the road ahead.

My Scan Results Log

One of the most valuable habits I've developed is keeping a personal record of every CT scan.

When you're living with cancer, months can turn into years of appointments, scans, treatments, and conversations. It becomes surprisingly difficult to remember exactly when a tumor shrank, when a medication changed, or what your oncologist said after a particular scan.

Keeping your own scan log creates a timeline of your journey.

It helps you recognize progress that might otherwise be forgotten and gives you a place to record important milestones, treatment decisions, and questions for future appointments.

Over time, this log becomes more than a medical record.

It becomes your story.

Record the Following Information

Date of CT Scan: _____

Location: _____

Type of Scan:

☐ CT with Contrast

☐ CT without Contrast

☐ PET Scan

☐ MRI

☐ Other: _____

Reason for Scan:

Results Summary

Overall Impression

☐ Improvement

☐ Stable Disease

☐ Mixed Response

☐ Progression

☐ Other: _____

Notes

Discussion with My Oncologist

What were the key findings?

Were there any changes compared to my previous scan?

Did my treatment plan change?

Were any new medications, tests, or procedures recommended?

My Questions and Notes

Looking Ahead

Next Appointment: _____

Next CT Scan: _____

Blood Work: _____

Other reminders:

My Reminder for Today

I've learned not to judge my journey by a single scan.

Cancer treatment is often a marathon, not a sprint. Some scans bring incredible encouragement. Others bring setbacks. Neither one tells the whole story.

When I look back through my scan log, I'm reminded of how many obstacles I've already overcome and how far I've come. It gives me perspective that I often lose in the emotion of a single appointment.

This log isn't just a place to record medical information.

It's a reminder that every scan, every treatment, and every appointment is another chapter in a journey marked by courage, perseverance, and hope.

"One scan is a snapshot. Your journey is the entire story."

My Personal Encouragement

If you've made it this far in this guide, I want to leave you with one final thought.

Cancer has taught me many lessons that I never wanted to learn.

I've learned that life can change in a single phone call.

I've learned that fear and hope can exist in the same heart at the same time.

I've learned that courage isn't the absence of fear. It's choosing to move forward even when you're afraid.

And I've learned that some of life's greatest blessings are found in the moments we once took for granted.

When I was diagnosed with stage four cancer, I didn't know what the future would hold. There were days filled with uncertainty, difficult treatments, setbacks, and moments when I questioned what was ahead.

Yet there were also unexpected victories.

Prayers answered.

Time with family that became even more meaningful.

A deeper appreciation for each new day.

And moments of hope that reminded me never to give up.

Today, I still live with uncertainty. Every CT scan carries questions that can't be answered until the results are in. But I've stopped allowing those questions to rob me of the joy that's available today.

I've discovered that while I can't always control my circumstances, I can choose how I respond to them.

I can choose gratitude.

I can choose hope.

I can choose faith over fear.

I can choose to make the most of the day I've been given.

If your upcoming scan brings good news, I hope you'll celebrate every victory, no matter how small.

If it brings difficult news, I hope you'll remember that one scan doesn't determine the end of your story. Treatments change. New therapies become available. Medical advances continue every year. And even during the hardest seasons, there is still room for hope.

No matter where you are in your journey, please remember this:

You are more than a diagnosis.

You are more than a scan report.

You are more than a collection of medical records.

You are a person with dreams, people who love you, and a life that still matters.

Thank you for allowing me to walk beside you during this part of your journey.

I sincerely hope this checklist has brought you a little more peace, a little more confidence, and a reminder that you don't have to face scan week alone.

Keep asking questions.

Keep advocating for yourself.

Keep finding reasons to smile.

And above all...

Keep hoping.

"One CT scan cannot measure your courage. One report cannot define your future. Hope is always stronger than fear."

Wayne Schlicht

Stage 4 Cancer Survivor

Continue Your Journey

Thank you for downloading My CT Scan Week Survival Checklist.

I sincerely hope it has helped you feel a little more prepared, a little more organized, and a little more at peace as you approach your next CT scan.

This checklist is only one part of what I've learned during my cancer journey.

When I was diagnosed with stage four cancer, I wanted honest information from someone who had actually walked the road ahead of me. I wanted practical advice, encouragement, and hope grounded in real experience.

That's why I created [Wayne's Cancer Journey](#).

My mission is simple:

To encourage, educate, and inspire cancer patients, caregivers, and families by sharing my personal experience, practical resources, and the lessons I've learned along the way.

Whether you're newly diagnosed, living with metastatic cancer, supporting someone you love, or simply looking for reliable information, I hope you'll find resources that encourage you.

Free Resources You May Find Helpful

[The Cancer Resource Center](#)

The **Cancer Resource Center** is your starting point for practical, evidence-informed articles, downloadable guides, and personal insights from my journey with stage 4 cancer. Whether you're a patient, caregiver, or simply looking for hope and reliable information, you'll find resources designed to educate, encourage, and help you navigate cancer with greater confidence.

[Understanding Stage 4 Cancer](#)

Learn what a stage four diagnosis really means, common treatment options, and why every patient's journey is unique.

[Cancer Treatment Options](#)

An easy to understand overview of surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, and other treatments your oncologist may discuss.

[Living with Scanxiety](#)

Explore additional strategies for managing the emotional stress that often comes before scans and while waiting for results.

[Voice Recovery After Radiation](#)

Read about my journey recovering my voice after extensive radiation treatments and the lessons I learned along the way.

[Nutrition and Cancer](#)

Discover the nutrition changes I made after my diagnosis and why simplifying my diet became an important part of my overall health journey.

My Story

My cancer journey has included:

- Seventy radiation treatments
- Chemotherapy
- A radical neck dissection
- Immunotherapy
- Countless CT scans
- Moments of uncertainty
- Moments of incredible hope

Through it all, I've discovered that every new day is a gift and that even in life's most difficult seasons, hope is worth holding onto.

If sharing my experiences can help even one person feel less alone, then every article I've written has been worthwhile.

Stay Connected

I'm continually adding new articles, downloadable resources, and practical tools designed to help cancer patients and caregivers navigate their journey with greater confidence.

I invite you to visit:

[Wayne's Cancer Journey](#)

While you're there, you can:

- Read new articles
- Explore the Cancer Resource Center
- Download additional free resources
- Learn more about my story
- Subscribe to receive future updates

One Final Thought

No one chooses the cancer journey.

But none of us have to walk it alone.

Wherever you are today, whether you're celebrating good news, waiting for answers, beginning treatment, or supporting someone you love, I hope you'll continue to choose hope over fear, one day at a time.

Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your journey.

I wish you peace during your next scan, wisdom in every conversation with your medical team, and hope for the road ahead.

Wayne Schlicht

Stage 4 Cancer Survivor

Author of Still Here: How Faith, Food, and Family Helped Me Fight Stage 4 Cancer

WaynesCancerJourney.com

Real experiences. Practical resources. Hope for the journey.