

CLAUSTROPHOBIA IN MRI

By: Melinda Webster RT(R)(MR), MRI Supervisor

Individuals with claustrophobia make many efforts to avoid small spaces and situations that trigger their panic. Those who suffer from the phobia know all too well the ways in which they avoid those personal triggers such as choosing to take the stairs instead of riding the elevator or avoiding public areas where large crowds gather. What happens, however, to this individual's choice when their doctor informs them for the need of an MRI?

Claustrophobia in MRI is a common occurrence, which is why Elliot has a variety of options among its MRI machines to best meet the needs of our patients. Elliot at Londonderry is home to our 1.5 Tesla Siemens Espree, a 70cm Open Bore design with an Ultrashort system length of 125cm. This magnet has the ability to scan most exams feet first which depending upon your height means the potential for completing an exam without your head ever going inside the machine. The Elliot at River's Edge is home to our Siemens Verio, a 3 Tesla high field strength magnet which also has a 70cm Open Bore along with TIM Technology (Total Imaging Matrix) making it possible to scan from head to toe without moving a muscle.

The feeling of claustrophobia is frequent and problematic for many who have entered our facilities yet the amount of patients who leave without a scan is few and far between. With highly skilled and experienced staff we take claustrophobia seriously and will work with anyone who



wishes to complete the exam. Going into the scanner feet first when possible is one solution frequently used and is found to be helpful for many patients. When feet first is not an option, we have solutions for that too. All of the Elliot MRI machines offer prism technology allowing mirrors to help guide your vision beyond that of the inside of the machine. Sometimes our patients decide to view the technologists who are checking in on them frequently by way of intercom system, or looking outside through the large picture window depending on which MRI facility is chosen. When either of those options does not work, some patients enjoy wearing an eye mask or light towel over their eyes from start to finish, or simply keeping their eyes closed. Occasionally, patients require medication which can be provided from the doctor ordering the exam. This works well for many who choose this method and simply requires early arrival to the appointment and a designated driver. Every patient at each of our facilities is in control of whether or not the exam is completed and is given a squeeze ball to alert the

technologists when he or she wishes to come out of the MRI. Sometimes having a loved one hold your hand, or remain by your side proves to be the best option for success. This is also welcomed as long as he or she passes the necessary safety screening.

If you are someone who suffers from claustrophobia and needs an MRI to aid in a diagnosis, give Elliot MRI an opportunity to provide you

a solution.

One patient stated: *"I am claustrophobic and have an extreme fear of MRI's, so when my neurosurgeon told me he needed a more recent one, my anxiety began at that moment. I have had MRI's done at three other open MRI locations in NH and MA and decided to explore other options. I contacted your facility in Londonderry to inquire. I was so impressed by Ann's kindness and understanding during a visit to see the machine that when I left, I called my Dr.'s office and scheduled the MRI for me. When I arrived the following day I was not as nervous as I had been for previous MRI's. Anne and Val proceeded to get me through that familiar and dreaded lumbar spine MRI with minimal discomfort and fear. These women helped me overcome a severe phobia by treating me so kindly and professionally. After this experience I will never even contemplate going anywhere else for any imaging!"*

We have had many success stories such as this and we welcome individuals to check out what we do and who we are at elliothospital.org, or 603-663-8481 for additional questions regarding services we offer or concerns you may have.