



## Rehearsal Guide

# MRI: A Picture for Health

*Preparing people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) to successfully complete an MRI*

# Introduction for Caregivers

A rehearsal guide contains realistic pictures, concrete ideas, and clear, brief instructions for guiding a person through what can be expected in a specific situation. It includes helpful suggestions for caregivers to follow to make the experience meaningful for the person and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. This approach is beneficial when supporting people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) who are anxious about situations such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, and medical testing.

A rehearsal guide provides opportunities for the caregiver to assist the person to learn about a specific situation. It contains information on what is needed and why and explains exactly what can be expected. Such a guide is most effective when it is person-centered and used in conjunction with discussion to allow exploration of specific areas of concern. It can be a powerful tool when used as intended.

The expected result is that the person will then experience the situation in a way that supports health and well-being by being prepared and knowing what to expect. The guide can be used at all stages of the situation to facilitate a positive end result.

Thank you for taking the time to use this tool to work with self-advocates to improve their health outcomes.

## How to Use This Rehearsal Guide

For best results, begin to review this rehearsal guide with the person prior to the day of the appointment. Sometimes it will help to review this material with an individual several days or weeks before an appointment; other times, it may be better to wait to review this material until just before the procedure is to take place, perhaps the day before or the morning of the procedure. Together with the individual, determine which will best suit the individual's needs and abilities in understanding the information provided; however, it is important not to wait until 5 minutes before a procedure to introduce this guide to an individual. Give the individual enough time in advance to become familiar with the procedure based on the pictures and information contained on each page and with the individual's abilities in mind.

It is best to review this guide slowly and to focus on one idea/page at a time, allowing the person to talk and/or ask questions after each idea/page is presented. A caregiver may want to share personal experiences related to having this procedure done but be sure to do so in a positive manner, depicting a positive outcome.

## For Best Practices

- ✓ Allot time to review this material when the individual is alert and interested in doing so.
- ✓ Ensure that the setting is free from distraction. Based on the individual's attention span, it may be best to review one page at a time, rather than reviewing an entire guide in one sitting.
- ✓ Explain each picture and practice the suggested exercises with the individual, such as deep breathing, as they appear throughout the guide.
- ✓ On the day of the procedure, take this guide along to continue rehearsing the various steps involved in the procedure. Review each page step by step.
- ✓ Remain positive, calm, and upbeat.
- ✓ Remember to offer positive reinforcement throughout the procedure. If the procedure is not able to be completed, focus on positive aspects. If the individual seems upset, talk about it later when they are calm to find out how they felt and what could be changed or improved to have a better outcome the next time.

# Introducing the Process

(Name of individual), you are going to have  
a special picture called an MRI taken of the inside of your  
body on (insert date here).

The doctor ordered this test for you to help keep you healthy.

(Name of caregiver) will go with you and stay with you while you have  
the pictures taken.

This test will take place at (name of location).

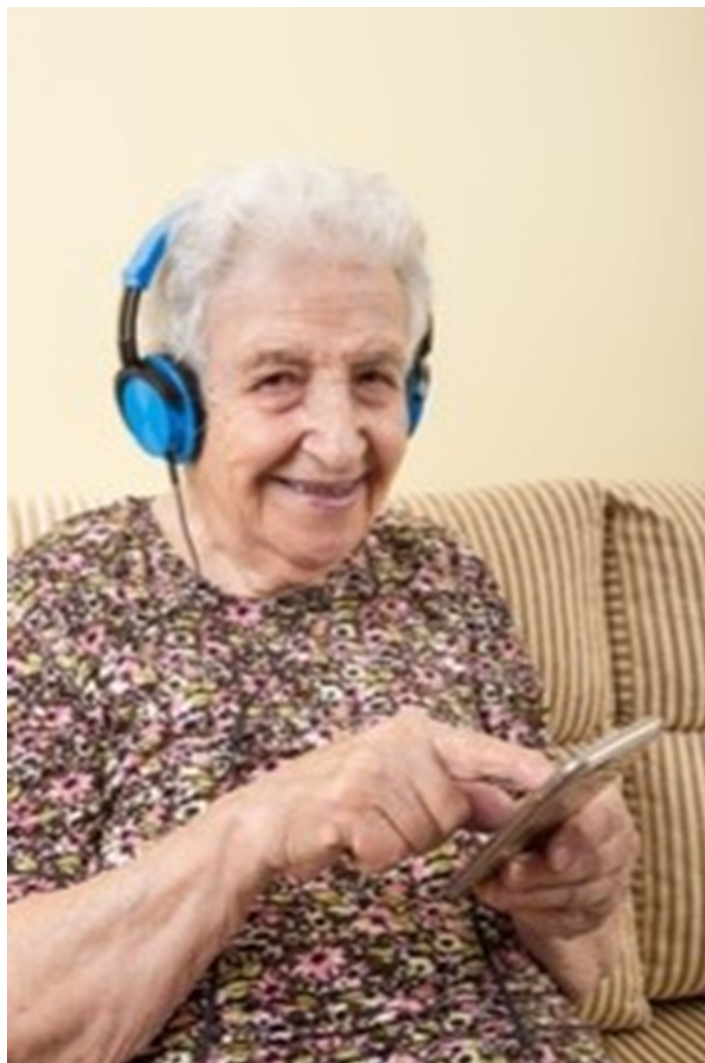


# In the Waiting Room

When you first get to your appointment, you will have to wait until someone calls your name.

(Name of caregiver) will stay in the waiting room with you.

Would you like to take a favorite book along to read or some of your favorite music to listen to on your headset while you wait?



# What Not to Wear

For your safety, keep jewelry and any clothing with metal snaps or buttons at home.

You will be asked some questions before you have the MRI such as “Do you have a pacemaker or metal implants?” If you don’t know the answer to one of the questions, it’s okay to say you don’t know or to ask your caregiver to help you.



**Note to Caregiver:** The MRI has a magnet in it. For safety, keep jewelry and any clothing with metal snaps or buttons at home. If possible, have the individual wear sweatpants or clothing without any metal snaps or buttons.

*Many times the MRI questions are asked when the test is scheduled. These questions are asked again at the time of the appointment. Please assist the individual in answering the questions as needed.*

# Changing Into a Patient Gown

There will be people at this place who will tell you what you need to do.  
These people are there to help you.

They will tell you that you need to take off your clothes and put on a patient gown before the pictures are taken. Your clothing will be taken care of while you are in the gown.

It is okay to listen to these people, and (name of caregiver) will be right there with you to assist you and make sure that you are all right.



**Note to Caregiver:** You may want to reassure the individual that the dressing room is private. Remember to be patient and speak in a low, reassuring tone while assisting the individual.



# Taking the MRI Picture

The person (technician) who will be taking the picture will help you lie down on the MRI table so the picture can be taken.





# Taking the MRI Picture



The MRI table is hard. The technician will try to make you comfortable and may put a special pillow under your knees. When it is time for the picture to be taken, the table will move you into the machine. It is like going into a tunnel.

**Note to Caregiver:** Sometimes a different type of MRI machine may be used. If an open MRI or standing MRI machine is ordered, please contact the KEPRO HCQU for more information.

# Taking the MRI Picture



The MRI machine makes loud noises. This is normal. The technician may give you earplugs or headphones to wear to protect your hearing. Sometimes the headphones even play music!

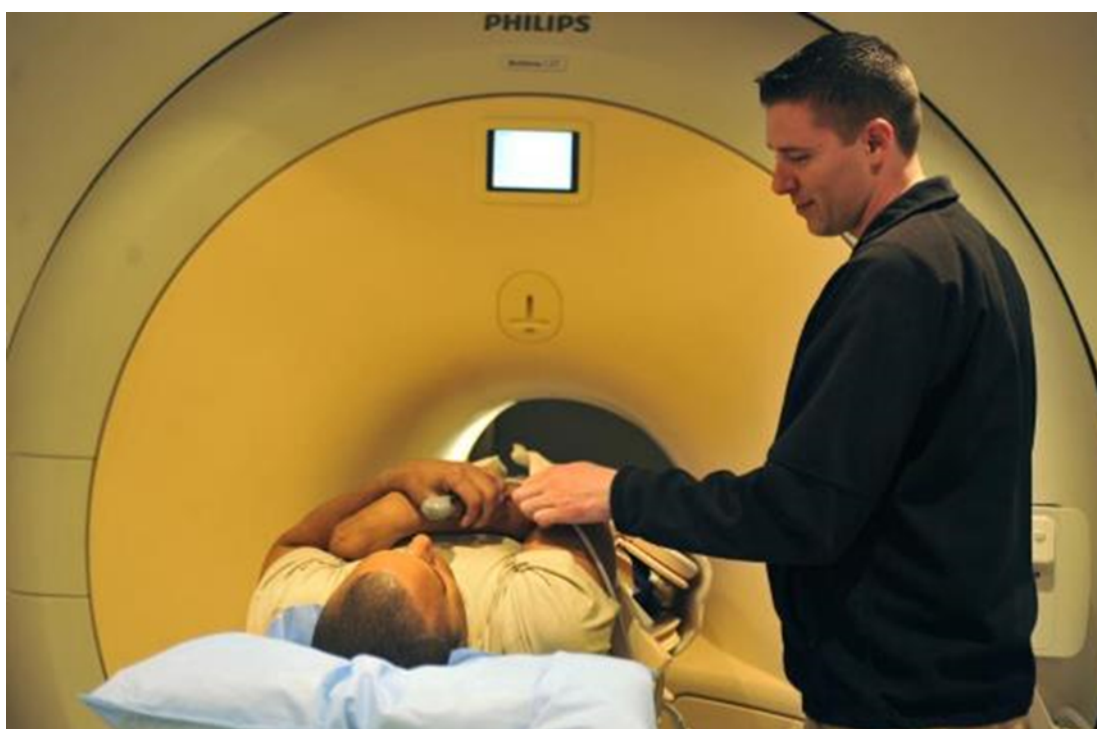
This test may take between 15 to 60 minutes. The technician will tell you how long your test will take.

It is best to relax and lie very still.

If possible, (*Name of caregiver*) will be close-by so that you won't be alone.

# Taking the MRI Picture

When you are in the machine, the technician can hear you, speak to you and watches you at all times. You will be given a button to hold. You may push this if you need anything.



**Note to Caregiver:** Some MRI exams require contrast. If you know that the person you support will have this type of MRI, you may wish to review the [Rehearsal Guide for IV Therapy](#). When contrast is ordered, the technician will slide the table out of the scanner and inject the contrast into the person's IV line.

# Breathing Exercise

Sometimes you may need to hold your breath to get the best picture. The person helping may ask you to hold your breath for just a short time during the MRI.

Let's practice holding our breath.



**Note to Caregiver:** Practice holding your breath with the individual. Encourage the individual to hold his/her breath with you when the time comes during the exam. If possible, ask the examining facility if the person will be required to hold his or her breath and what phrase they use to ask the person to do it; use that phrase to practice.

# You're Doing Great So Far

When the MRI is done, the table will slide out of the machine. It's like coming out of a tunnel. The technician will help you off the table. Do not get up until they tell you. The table needs to be lowered closer to the ground before you get up.

**See? It's that simple!**  
**I know you can do it! You always do a great job!**



**Note to Caregiver:** Offer the individual praise and encouragement as you continue to explain the following steps.

## Almost Done!!

When the MRI is done, you may be asked to wait while the technician makes sure he or she got all of the pictures needed.





## Great Job!! I Know You Can Do It!!

When all the pictures are approved, you will be able to go back to the room where your clothes are. You will take off the hospital gown and get dressed again.

Great job, (individual's name here)!



**Note to Caregiver:** This is a good place to assess how well the person understood what was presented. Ask some very brief questions such as, “Do you know what will happen when you go to have these special pictures done?” Revisit the story as often as needed to ensure the person understands and is prepared when the day of the test arrives.



## Additional Resources

- Radiological Society of North America  
<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=pediatric-mri>
- Vanderbilt University  
<https://www.childrenshospitalvanderbilt.org/information/preparing-your-childs-sedated-mri>

## References

- Preparing for Your Child's Sedated MRI. (n.d.). *Preparing for Your Child's Sedated MRI*. Retrieved April 2021, from Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt:  
<https://www.childrenshospitalvanderbilt.org/information/preparing-your-childs-sedated-mri>
- RadiologyInfo.org. (2020, January 28). *Children's (Pediatric) Magnetic Resonance Imaging*. Retrived April 2021, from RadiologyInfo.org:  
<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=pediatric-mri>



For additional information regarding this guide or any of our physical or behavioral health trainings, contact:

**Kepro SW PA Health Care Quality Unit  
(Kepro HCQU)**