

Chemotherapy and Hair Loss

What to expect

Most people take their hair for granted until they are faced with losing it from chemotherapy treatments. A diagnosis of cancer is devastating to anyone and suffering through effects of chemotherapy is a difficult road to being well again. However, both men and women report hair loss as one of the side effects they dread most after being diagnosed with cancer.

Whether or not you have hair loss from your chemotherapy depends mostly on the type and dose of medication you receive. All the side effects from chemotherapy can be grueling and take a toll on you physically, emotionally and mentally. Maintaining a good body image is important to your health and when you look good, you do feel better!

If hair loss is a side effect of your treatment, your first indication will be excess shedding. Hair usually begins falling out two to three weeks after your first treatment. It could fall



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out very quickly in clumps or gradually. It is common for your scalp to feel tender.

Many women will opt to shave their heads at the first sign of hair loss rather than allowing it to shed for a week or so until it is all gone.

Coping with Hair Loss

There are many choices to cope with chemo related hair loss. Some women are self confident enough to go without head coverings, however, most women prefer to wear a wig similar to their usual style. Hats, head scarves and turbans are popular as well.

Fortunately, fake looking wigs are a thing of the past. Technology has advanced considerably. Wigs can look natural and be comfortable. Hair prostheses are the latest advancement in replacing lost hair. They are custom made to meet the specific needs of the hair loss patient. It will take several weeks to get your custom made wig after you order it, so you will need to go to your wig stylist as soon as you can.

Wigs and prosthetic hair systems can be a tax deduction and sometimes covered by insurance. Contact your health insurance company to find out.

The American Cancer Society can be very helpful in finding free wig programs or can help offset the cost.

What should I do after my hair falls out?

- Protect your head from the sun. If you choose to not wear a wig, use sunscreen on any exposed scalp or wear a hat when you are outside.
- Protect your head from the cold. Wear a hat or scarf.
- Try wearing a soft scarf when you sleep.

- Use a good moisturizer on your scalp.
- Learn to use makeup to enhance your facial features and brighten your skin

When will my hair grow back?

Most likely your hair will start to grow back in 2 to 4 months after chemotherapy. Sometimes your new hair can be curlier or straighter - or even a different color. Often it will grow back with a lot more gray than before you lost it. In time, it will probably go back to it's normal texture. It can also start growing back in some areas, often the back and nape areas, before it starts growing back on the top and front.



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Hair grows about a ½ inch each month so it could take a year for short styles to grow in and two years to get longer hair back.

If you want longer hair sooner, hair extensions are an option. When your hair is four inches on top you can get extensions to lengthen it to your shoulders.

What to do when your hair is growing back?

When your hair is an inch or so long, come to The Hair Specialists for a free consultation. We would like to help you through the growing process including scalp treatments to encourage hair growth, supplements that support hair growth and hair pieces that can add volume while you hair grows.

Schedule Your Appointment Online at
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