

# Hair Loss

Some chemotherapy and radiation treatments can cause hair loss. Other health conditions can also cause hair loss. This hair loss is called alopecia. Hair loss can be difficult to deal with because hair gives shape to the face and helps to keep us warm by preventing the loss of body heat. Loss of scalp hair can also affect a person's self-image.

For people being treated for cancer, hair loss depends on the kind of treatment you have. The type and dose of chemotherapy or the dose and location of radiation therapy affect hair loss. Hair is more likely to be lost from the head than from other parts of the body. This is because scalp hair grows faster than other body hair. Ask your doctor or nurse if you should expect hair loss.

## Hair Loss caused by Radiation Therapy

The dose of radiation and what part of your body is treated affect how much and how long a person has hair loss. Hair may be lost only from the area of the body being treated with radiation. The scalp and the area behind the ears may become sensitive. At high doses of radiation, hair loss could be permanent. If radiation doses are lower, hair may grow in again but the color or texture may change.

## Hair Loss caused by Chemotherapy

Some types of chemotherapy at certain doses cause hair loss. You might notice hair loss after your first treatment, or later after several treatments. Sometimes scalp hair will thin out slowly. Hair can also fall out in clumps when brushing, showering or shampooing. Sometimes hair will be lost from other parts of the body. Hair can begin to grow again during chemotherapy or 1 to 2 months after treatment is finished. New hair may have a slightly different color and/or texture.

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**Learn more about your health care.**

## **Hair Care Tips**

- Wash hair at least every 4 to 7 days using a mild shampoo and conditioner.
- Rinse hair well and gently pat hair dry with a towel. Keep your scalp clean even after hair loss.
- Use a wide tooth comb.
- Choose "soft hold" hair sprays that can easily be brushed through once dry.
- Limit use of blow dryers, rollers (curlers) and curling or straightening irons to prevent breaking the hair shafts.
- Limit wearing hair clips, barrettes, and pins (bobby pins) and hairstyles such as braids, ponytails, and pigtails to protect hairs from breaking.
- Your hairstylist/barber or physician may know hair care products they would suggest for you.

## **Options for Hair Loss**

There are several options for head coverings for hair loss. Wigs and hairpieces can be purchased at some beauty salons and at specialty shops like Hope's Boutique. It is often better to shop for a wig before your hair falls out, so the color and style can be matched better. Hats, turbans and scarves can protect the scalp, as well as add to one's appearance. Here are helpful tips:

- Remember to wear sunscreen on your scalp if you go outside without a head covering.
- Remember to keep head coverings clean.

## **Financial Assistance**

If you wish to see about obtaining a wig, talk to your doctor about a prescription for a "cranial hair prosthesis". Check with your insurance company to find out what coverage you may have for a wig or cranial hair prosthesis (sometimes called a "full scalp prosthesis"), or for another type of head covering. You may ask your nurse or social worker about other financial assistance that might be available.

## **Support Programs and Services**

The James Cancer Hospital offers the Look Good . . . Feel Better program. This program is specifically designed for women with cancer who are having chemotherapy or radiation therapy. The Look Good . . . Feel Better program is sponsored by the American Cancer Society, the National Cosmetology Association, and the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association. For more information, call 614-293-GOOD (4663).

### **The James Cancer Hospital also has a program to help people get wigs and head coverings:**

- **Hope's Boutique** This is a shop in the Stoneridge Medical Center at 4049 W. Dublin Granville Road, Dublin, Ohio, 43017. The Boutique sells wigs, hair alternatives and accessories. It also sells silicone breast prostheses, mastectomy bras, hats, swimwear and gift items. Phone for information and directions, (614) 293-9393.

❖ **Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3703 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**