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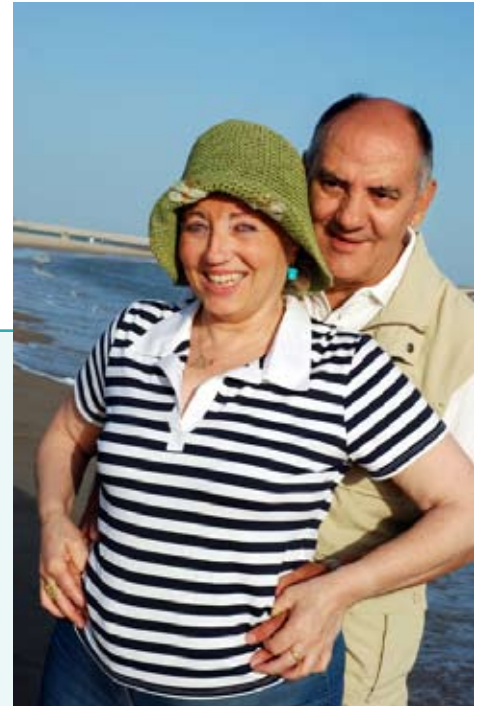
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fact sheet

## Tips for Managing Hair Loss

For many people, hair loss is a distressing aspect of cancer treatment. Losing our hair can change our sense of identify – that is, how we see ourselves and how we relate to others; this, in turn, can affect our quality of life. If you are concerned about hair loss, talk it over with a member of your health care team. Your oncologist or oncology nurse, for example, can tell you whether hair loss is a possible side effect of your treatment. He or she will also be able to point you to resources available to help you cope.



### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT HAIR LOSS

**Why does hair loss happen?** Hair loss from chemotherapy or radiation happens when hair follicles are weakened by the treatment. This causes your hair to fall out much more quickly than it normally would.

**When does hair loss happen?** Depending on the type of treatment you receive, hair loss may start anywhere from seven to 21 days after treatment begins.

**Where does hair loss happen?** Chemotherapy may lead to hair loss on your legs, arms, underarms, pubic area, chest, eyelashes and eyebrows, in addition to your head. Hair loss from radiation affects only the part of the body being treated.

**Will my hair grow back?** Your hair will start to grow back once you are finished with treatment, but it may take six to 12 months to grow back completely. New hair may even have a different texture – for example, curly hair can grow back straight, and dark hair can grow in lighter. These changes are usually not permanent. However, radiation sometimes causes permanent hair loss.

### HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR OBTAINING, WEARING AND PAYING FOR A WIG:

**Buy a wig before all of your hair falls out.** This way, you will have a good match to your own hair color. Having a wig ahead of time will also help you feel more prepared.

**Get a professional fitting.** There are full-service wig salons that fit and style wigs. Some of these salons even specialize in helping women with treatment-related hair loss.

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**Use double-sided tape to keep your wig on.** Many wigs have tape-tab materials called “stickies” that let you use double-sided tape to hold your wig in place. Ask your wig specialist for hypoallergenic double-sided tape.

**Consider wearing a scarf or turban.** Wig salons often sell turbans and scarves that come in a variety of colors and fabrics. These can be worn out in public instead of a wig, depending on your preference, or when you’re at home.

**Find out if your health insurance company covers the cost of wigs.** If so, remember to save your receipt. If your wig is not covered by your insurance company, save your receipt anyway; the purchase qualifies as a medical tax deduction.

**If you can’t afford a wig, contact CancerCare.** We may be able to provide you with a free wig, or we can refer you to an organization in your community that provides them at no cost.



## FINDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Talking to others who have experienced hair loss, or to individuals who have professional experience in the matter, will help you during this difficult period. Here are some suggestions:

- **Connect with a friend or another patient who understands what you are going through.** Call this person when you’re feeling sad or uncertain about what to do.
- **Join a support group.** You’ll get emotional support and feel less alone. Plus, you can share your valuable tips with others and receive helpful guidance.
- **Talk to a counselor or oncology social worker.** He or she can assist you in finding resources, guide you through difficult decision-making, and help you feel more in control.

### **CancerCare Can Help**

CancerCare’s professional oncology social workers are available to help you cope with hair loss and other side effects of cancer treatment. We provide individual counseling and support groups by telephone, online, or in person. CancerCare also offers education, financial assistance, and referrals to other resources. To learn more about how we help, call us at **1-800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit **[www.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org)**.



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