

# How to Deal with Hair Loss

## Hair Loss

Hair loss is a common side effect of many chemotherapy medicines and radiation used to treat cancer. How much hair you lose and how long you will lose it depends on the types of medicines used and the areas of radiation.

For many people, hair loss is one of the most difficult side effects of cancer treatment because it affects their self-image and quality of life. Remember — everyone's experience is different and that hair loss caused by chemotherapy is usually not permanent.

## General Information

- Hair loss can start anywhere from 7 to 21 days after treatment.
- Hair will usually fall out gradually or in clumps.
- Any hair still growing may become dull and dry.
- Your hair will start to grow back when you are finished with your treatments.
- It may take up to 6 to 12 months to grow back completely.
- Hair may grow back with a different color or texture.
- You may also have hair loss from other parts of your body, such as eyebrows, eyelashes and genital area.
- Radiation to the head may cause permanent hair loss.
- Get a wig or hairpiece before your hair falls out.

- The purchase of a wig or hairpiece is tax-deductible. Some insurance companies may cover the cost — check your policy.
- Consider borrowing a wig or hairpiece. Check with the local chapter of the American Cancer Society.
- Try hats, turbans and scarves for hair coverings. Check with the local American Cancer Society to find out about Look Good...Feel Better programs in your area.

## How to Manage Hair Loss

- Use mild shampoos.
- Use soft hairbrushes.
- Avoid hair dryers or use the lowest heat setting.
- Cut your hair short. This makes the hair look thicker and fuller and it will also make hair loss easier to manage if it occurs.
- Avoid permanents or hair coloring at this time.
- Be sure to cover your head or use sunscreen (SPF 15) when exposed to sunlight.
- Cover your head in winter to prevent heat loss.

Hair loss from chemotherapy or radiation can be hard to accept. It's common and normal for both women and men to feel angry or depressed about this outward sign of their illness. Remember that preparing yourself in advance can enhance the quality of your life during and after treatment.

Talk with your nurse if you have any other questions about hair loss.