

Cancer: Preparing for Hair Loss From Chemotherapy

Losing your hair from chemo can be really hard.

It may feel like a huge change in your identity ... one that you have absolutely no control over.

But you can take back some control by thinking about what image you want to show the world ... and how you're going to approach this chapter of your life.

Maybe you want to be out in the open ... totally transparent.

Or maybe you want to try to keep the look you had before.

Or ... maybe you want to try to mix up your look a little. It's totally up to you.

Your doctor can probably give you an idea of how much hair loss you can expect and when you might lose it, depending on the kind of chemo you're getting.

It may range from a little thinning to complete loss, not just on your head but all over your body ... including your eyelashes and eyebrows.

The following tips will help you prepare ... so you can plan ahead.

If you have long hair, you may want to consider cutting it shorter so you get used to having less hair.

Your hairdresser may have some style suggestions for you.

Think about whether you want to embrace your new look ... or ... if you're more comfortable covering up with scarves, hats, turbans, or caps ... or with a wig or hairpiece.

Either way, as more hair falls out, it may help to shave off the rest of your hair.

That can help you avoid clumps of hair falling out, which can be upsetting.

If you think you might want a wig or hairpiece, it's a good idea to get one before you start treatment.

That way, you have the option to match your usual color, texture, and cut ... which can help make the transition easier.

If you'd like help finding a good wig or other head coverings, there are lots of organizations that can help you ... like your local cancer society.

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Whatever choice you make, it may help to remind yourself that hair loss is temporary.

Almost all hair starts to grow back in 2 to 3 months after treatment, although it may be a different texture or color.

And when it grows back in, your scalp may feel tender or sore.

Using a gentle shampoo ... like a baby shampoo ... and a soft hair brush ... can help.

Protecting your head from the sun can help too.

Losing your hair from chemo can be very challenging.

It can make you reflect on a lot of things about yourself ... and other people too.

Share your feelings with your cancer care team ... and be sure to ask them about any concerns you have.