

# Managing Hair Loss (Alopecia)



## **Will I lose my hair?**

Some cancer treatments may cause you to lose hair from your head as well as your body. Chemotherapy injures rapidly-dividing cells, such as cancer cells and those that make hair. Radiation therapy only affects hair in the area being treated. Hair loss from either therapy can start 1 to 3 weeks after treatment begins.

## **When will it grow back?**

Your hair should start to regrow within 2 to 3 months after ending chemotherapy and 3 to 6 months after ending radiation therapy. Your new hair may have a different color or texture. In some cases, it may not grow back.

# Tips to help you manage hair loss

## Minimizing hair loss

- › Keep your hair clean, but don't shampoo more than 2 to 3 times a week.
- › Use a mild shampoo, like baby shampoo.
- › Use a wide-tooth comb or soft-bristle brush to remove tangles. Use a detangler rinse as needed.
- › Avoid excessive brushing or combing.
- › Avoid hair dyes and bleach, permanent curl treatments, and curlers. Electric hair appliances may make hair brittle and cause it to fall out more easily.

## Protecting your skin and eyes

- › Wear hats or scarves to protect your scalp from the sun.
- › Wear glasses to protect your eyes from dust if your eyelashes fall out.

## Coping emotionally with hair loss

- › Talk about your feelings and experience with your family, friends, and healthcare providers.
- › Consider cutting your hair very short or shaving it off before it begins to fall out.
- › Consider wearing head coverings, such as wigs, hats, scarves, and turbans early on to help ease the transition.
- › Ask about wigs and community resources in your area. A wig may be a tax-deductible medical expense or covered by your insurance if you have a prescription from your physician. Check with your tax specialist or insurance company (use the term cranial prosthesis).
- › Use the healthy coping skills that you've used in other situations or try out some new ones. Meditation, relaxation, support groups, music, exercise, nature, pets, warm baths, spiritual practices, journaling, massage, and humor can help.
- › Be kind to yourself and take care of your physical needs. Being hungry, tired, nauseated, or in pain can make everything seem worse.



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