



Tips for Managing Hair Loss

For many people, hair loss is one of the more trying aspects of cancer treatment. When hair falls out, it affects our self-image and our quality of life. But you don't have to despair – you can go a long way towards boosting your own self-confidence with an educated attitude and some advance preparation. Everyone's experience is different, so it's important to become well informed about how your particular treatment affects hair loss. **Talk to your doctor, nurse, or social worker about what to expect.**

- **Why does hair loss happen?** Hair loss from chemotherapy treatment occurs for a very simple reason: hair follicles are weakened by chemotherapy which causes your hair to fall out much more quickly than it would normally.
- **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. Your hair will start to grow back when you are finished with chemotherapy but it may take six to 12 months to grow back completely. It may even have a different texture – for example, curly hair can grow back straight and dark hair can become lighter. *These changes are usually not permanent.* Radiation to the head or scalp, however, can cause permanent hair loss.
- **Where does hair loss happen?** Depending on where radiation is directed, you may also experience hair loss on your legs, arms, underarms, pubic area, chest, eyelashes, and eyebrows, in addition to your head.

What you should know about obtaining, wearing, and paying for a wig:

1. Buy a wig before all of your hair falls out so that you will have a good match to your own hair color and will be prepared when hair loss starts.
2. Keep in mind that there are full-service wig salons that fit and style wigs, some of which specialize in hair loss from chemotherapy.
3. Wig salons also sell turbans and scarves that come in a variety of colors and fabrics so that you can look good even when you're lounging around the house or at bedtime.
4. Wear *stickies* to keep your wig on. They are so effective that you'll forget you're wearing a wig.
5. If you can't afford a wig, contact CancerCare at 800-813-HOPE (4673), or a local cancer organization or support group for one that is free of charge.
6. Bear in mind that some health insurance plans cover the cost of wigs. Check into this.
7. If you buy a wig, save your receipt. It can be a medical tax deduction.

Getting Emotional Support

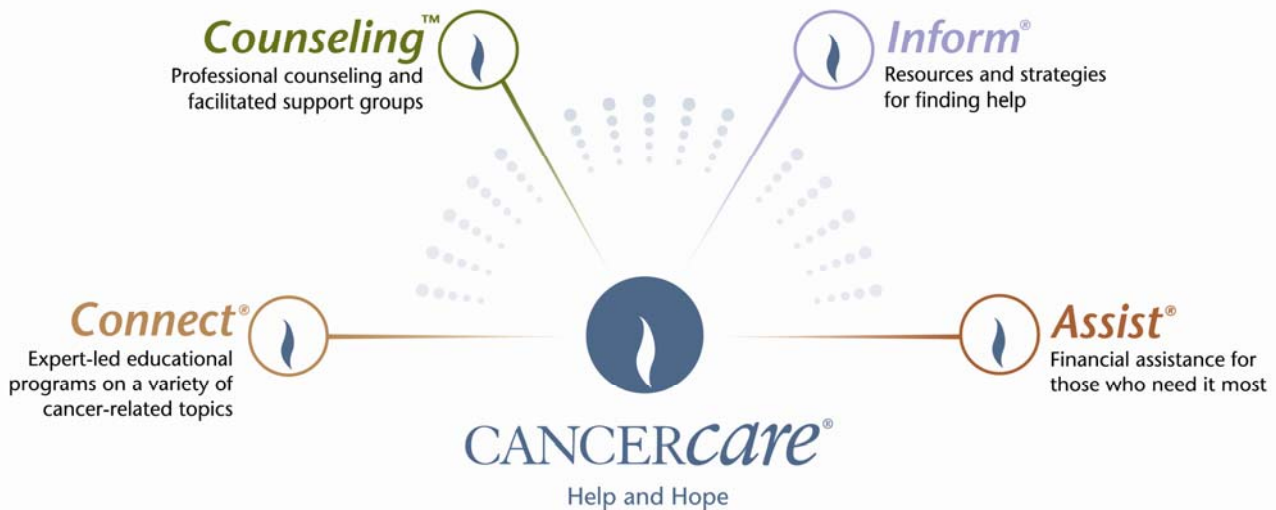
Talking to others who have experienced hair loss, or who have professional experience, will help you during this difficult period. Here are some suggestions:

- Join a support group. You'll get emotional support and feel less alone. Plus, you can share valuable tips for coping and receive helpful guidance.
- Find a buddy who understands what you are going through and call this person when you're feeling sad or uncertain about what to do.
- Talk to a counselor who can assist you in finding resources, guide you through difficult decision-making, and help you feel more in control.

CancerCare Can Help

CancerCare's staff of professional oncology social workers can help you cope with the side effects of cancer treatment. Our social workers offer people with cancer and their loved ones individual counseling and support groups via the telephone, online, or in person. CancerCare also offers education, practical help and referrals to other resources that can help you cope with a cancer diagnosis.

The CANCERcare® Constellation of Services



CancerCare's services are provided free of charge to anyone affected by cancer

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