



## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS FROM CHEMOTHERAPY

# HAIR LOSS

The first line of treatment for cancer is chemotherapy. While it is a highly effective treatment method that can kill cancer cells & stop the spread of cancer, it does have a few side effects like nausea, vomiting, fatigue, pain, sores, hair loss among others. The most distressing side effect for most patients seems to be hair loss.



## WHY DOES CHEMOTHERAPY AFFECT THE HAIR?

Chemotherapy involves powerful medications that destroy rapidly growing cancer cells. Unfortunately, these drugs also attack other growing cells in your body – such as those in the roots of your hair.

Chemotherapy can cause hair loss all over your body – not just on the scalp. In some cases eyelashes, eyebrows, hair in armpits, pubic and other body hair also falls out. Certain chemotherapy drugs are more likely to cause hair loss than others. While certain doses merely cause hair thinning, others can lead to complete baldness.

In most cases, hair loss is only temporary and can regrow within 3 to 6 months after the treatment stops. However, your hair may temporarily have a change of texture & shade.

## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM CHEMOTHERAPY?

Within two to four weeks of chemotherapy treatment, patients start to notice hair loss. In some cases the hair loss is very slow, in others it could fall out quickly in clumps. Most patients start to panic when they notice accumulated loose hair on pillow, in their hairbrush or in the shower drain. The scalp may also feel tender.

Hair loss continues throughout the treatment & even up to a few weeks after the treatment. Whether a patient experiences thinning or goes completely bald depends on the treatment. Speak to your oncologist about how your treatment will impact your hair.

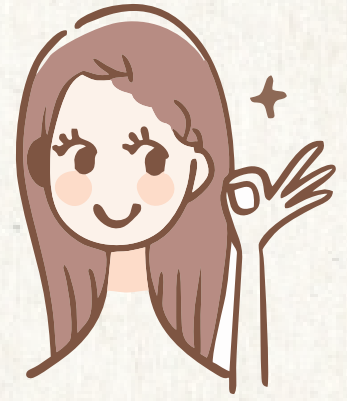


Hair loss can feel disheartening & depressing for most patients as it serves as a daily reminder of their illness.

## HOW TO MANAGE HAIR LOSS?

### TAKE CARE OF YOUR HAIR

Stay away from shampoos its strong odours or alcohol/salicylic acid content. Avoid colouring, straightening or perming your hair. Avoid using rollers, curling irons or straightening irons. Use a soft bristle comb & let your hair air dry.

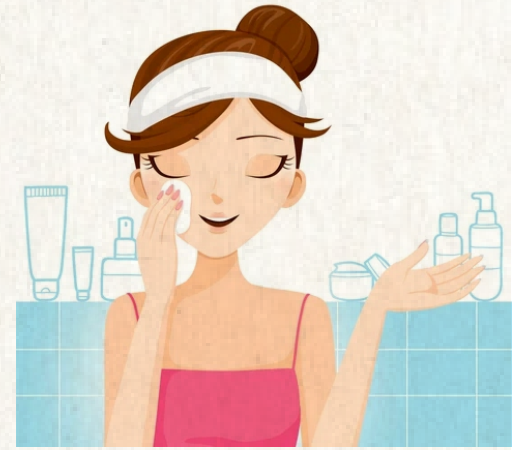


### TRY A SHORTER CUT

Consider cutting your hair short as it can make your hair look thicker & fuller. If you wish to shave your head, use an electric shaver or visit a salon. Avoid cuts that can occur due to plastic razors.

### CARE FOR YOUR SKIN

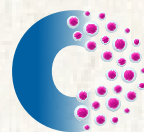
Hair loss can make your scalp itchy & tender. Some patients also experience a tingling sensation. Use a moisturising shampoo & conditioner can help with it.



### COVER UP

Shield yourself with a scarf or hat when you go outside. Do apply sunscreen to your scalp to protect against sunburn.

It is absolutely normal to feel anxious, depressed or self conscious about losing your hair. This is also especially more difficult for women as compared to men. Find a support group to connect with those going through the same thing.



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