



the Physicians of Oncology Hematology West

Managing Hair Loss

Chemotherapy not only damages rapidly dividing cells such as cancer cells, but also healthy cells, such as hair follicles. Some chemotherapy drugs can damage hair follicles which may lead to hair loss, also called alopecia.

When hair loss occurs, it typically begins 2 or 3 weeks after the first chemotherapy treatment.

In addition to hair on your head, you may lose eyebrows, eyelashes, facial hair, pubic hair, underarm hair, and leg hair. The amount of hair loss depends on the specific chemotherapy drug being used to treat your cancer.

Taking Action to Cope with Hair Loss

Hair loss is a temporary side effect of chemotherapy. After you've completed your chemo treatment, your hair will grow back and may look different than it did before.

In the meantime, here are a few tips to help you cope with the temporary hair loss:

- Cut your hair before it falls out. The experience of losing hair is sometimes worse than dealing with it once it's gone. If you expect to lose all or most of your hair, cutting it first may be easier.
- Plan ahead. Shop for a wig before your hair is gone, especially if you wish to match your natural color. Or, take this opportunity to try a different color.
- Try hats or head scarves; these are good alternatives or a complement to a wig.
- Remember to cover your head or use sunscreen on your scalp. Skin that has been covered with hair may be particularly sensitive to the sun's UV rays.
- Some insurance companies cover the cost of a wig. Talk with your insurance company.
- Treat your new hair gently once it grows back. Avoid chemicals, bleach, peroxide, or colors.
- The American Cancer Society's program, "Look Good...Feel Better" has materials available about wigs and pointers on head coverings. Get your free copy by calling **1-800-395-LOOK**.
- Another resource is www.heartofgoldwigs.com.

For more information feel free to visit the website chemocare.com