

What To Do

About Hair Loss (Alopecia)



“My doctor told me my long hair would fall out. To prepare for this big change I got my hair cut short before treatment started. And I bought some pretty earrings. I tried to make the best of a very hard time.”

Get Support.

Hair loss can be really difficult. Get the support you need. Talk with others who have lost their hair during treatment. Join an online or in-person support group. Or, talk with a social worker to get suggestions and tips.

Hair loss is called “alopecia.”

People lose hair only in the area where they get radiation. It starts to fall out 2 to 3 weeks after your first radiation therapy session.

If you are getting radiation to the head, you may lose the hair on your head.

Read what worked for others:

Before your hair falls out, think about how you will prepare for it. Here is what others have done:



Pat: “I took good care of my hair and just let it fall out by itself.”

- Wash your hair with a mild shampoo and gently pat it dry.
- **Do not** use hair dryers or other hair products, such as gels or clips.



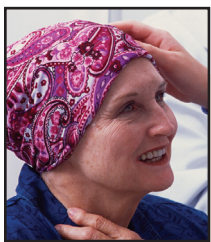
Candace: “I cut my hair before it fell out.”

- Cut your hair very short. This makes it easier to deal with when it starts to fall out.



Greg: “I shaved my head and got a new cap.”

- Use a good electric razor. Plastic razors can cut your head.
- Go to the barber shop or hair salon if you don’t have an electric razor.



Jackie: “I got a nice scarf.”

- If you want to match your current hair color, look for a wig before you lose your hair. Or try a new color or style. On days you just don’t want to wear a wig, try a scarf or hat.
- Wigs are often paid for by insurance. If not, it may help to get a prescription from your doctor for a “hair prosthesis.” You can also ask your social worker for help.

What should I do after my hair falls out?

Protect your scalp. Wear a hat or scarf when you are in cold places. Cover your head to protect it from the sun. Ask your doctor or nurse what lotions to use.

Will my hair grow back?

Your hair may grow back 3 to 6 months after treatment is over. In some cases, if you received a very high dose of radiation, your hair may not grow back. Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what you can expect.



Resources that can help you:

American Cancer Society

1-800-227-2345
(1-800-ACS-2345)
www.cancer.org

Look Good...Feel Better

1-800-395-5665
(1-800-395-LOOK)
www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org



NATIONAL
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How can we help?

National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)
Web: www.cancer.gov
Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 9 Radiation Therapy Side Effects Sheets at:
www.cancer.gov/radiation-side-effects

