



SCALP CARE GUIDE

OUR GUIDE TO CARING FOR YOUR SCALP AND
HAIR DURING CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT

0203 633 4713
info@headwrappers.org

www.headwrappers.org

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LOSING YOUR HAIR THROUGH CANCER TREATMENTS

You may experience hair loss if you are having chemotherapy, radiotherapy, or hormonal and targeted (biological) therapy.

In this document, we have tried to give some practical information, hints and tips, but there are lots of organisations and charities who are specialists in giving advice on hair loss. We suggest that to get more information, which may be specific to your treatment, you follow the links we have provided here and talk to your specialist cancer team.



SECTION ONE

PREPARING EMOTIONALLY FOR HAIR LOSS

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- Everyone reacts differently to their cancer treatments, both physically and emotionally, and it is okay if you feel sad about losing your hair.
- Our colleagues at Maggie's Centres or Macmillan Cancer Support offer a range of hair loss counselling services.
- Headwrappers' Tea, Top Knots & Turbans sessions are another way to talk to others going through the same experience. These are fortnightly virtual Zoom sessions, where those on the call talk informally about their experience, and where sometimes we have guest speakers talk to us on topics that we think you might find interesting or helpful.
- If you would like to join us at a Tea, Top Knots & Turbans session email advice@headwrappers.org and ask to join the Zoom invite list.



SECTION TWO

BEFORE TREATMENT

BEING PREPARED FOR HAIR LOSS

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- Speak to your oncologist or specialist nurse about the treatment you will be having and how this might affect you. Not all chemotherapy drugs cause hair loss. If your chemotherapy is likely to cause hair loss, be aware that in most cases this is usually temporary.
- If you are having a chemotherapy that causes hair loss, talk to your cancer team about scalp cooling if you think this might be of interest to you. There is lots of information about this available, here are some useful websites which have information about scalp cooling.
 - [NHS](#)
 - [OWise](#)
 - [Cancer Hair Care](#)
 - [Breast Cancer Now](#)
- Book a HeadWrappers' hair loss support session – you will be sent a free scarf in advance of the session to enable you to follow the demonstrations, and we will provide you with information to support you through your hair loss – enquire about a session by [emailing us here](#).
- Take a 'selfie' – you may want to check the position and shape of your eyebrows at a later date if they thin, or if you lose them.
- Consider booking an appointment with [Look Good Feel Better](#). This charity delivers sessions online and in various support centres. They will provide you with hints and tips about make-up and about managing hair loss in areas such as your eyebrows and eyelashes.
- Some types of hair need special consideration, for example, Cancer Hair Care provide useful information on [how to deal with afro hair](#). Please follow this link for further information and look at their website for a wide range of information on hair loss during cancer treatment.
- Take a lock of your hair – you may want to check your natural colour when choosing a wig or a hair piece, or at a time when you can colour your hair again after your treatment.
- Cutting long hair shorter can sometimes make the transition to hair loss easier to manage.
- If you have long hair you may wish to consider donating it to [The Little Princess Trust](#).



SECTION THREE

TIPS TO HELP YOU CARE FOR YOUR HAIR AND SKIN

INFORMATION TAKEN FROM NHS SCOTLAND
UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

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It's important to look after your hair and skin during and after cancer treatment.

If you're having radiotherapy, avoid using deodorants, soaps, perfumes and lotions and check which products you can use with your specialist cancer team.

To look after your hair:

- Try to wash no more than twice a week [Breast Cancer Now](#).
- Try not to wash your hair for two days after chemotherapy [Breast Cancer Now](#).
- Use gentle hair products - [Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

recommends using a gentle non-medicated shampoo.

- If you are having radiotherapy check with your radiotherapy team if you can use products on the affected area and if you can which ones are suitable.
- Only use conditioner on the middle and ends of long hair.
- Blot wet hair with a towel and use a wide-toothed comb.
- Avoid using hairdryers, straighteners or hot rollers.
- Avoid colouring, perming or relaxing.

- Try not to tie your hair in a tight band.
- If you lose your hair, it's important to look after the skin on your head and in other places where you had hair.

To look after your skin:

- Wash your scalp daily.
- Use an un-perfumed moisturiser.
- Use pillows made from natural fibres.
- Protect your head from the sun and from the cold.

Some extra points we think might help:

- A silk pillowcase can help reduce friction on your head during sleep and might result in less stress on your remaining hair.
- Get in touch with us if you want any help regarding headwear – our preferred suppliers offer discounts to our clients and we are happy to advise you on specific products to cover your head, depending on your lifestyle and requirements e.g., a special occasion, work or just answering the door to the postman!



SECTION FOUR

DURING HAIR LOSS

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- Continue to care for your hair and scalp as before. You could wear a sleep cap or soft hat in bed to keep your head warm and to catch any hair which falls out during the night.
- [Jennifer Young's skincare range](#) is specially formulated to nourish and soothe the side effects of cancer treatment on the skin. If your scalp gets dry you may find the products useful, but always check first that they are right for you and the treatment you are having.
- Alternatively, you could try applying natural oil, such as almond or olive oil. ([Breast Cancer Now](#)).
- Cancerpal have provided us with a gentle [massage guide](#), - we advise that you consult your medical team before embarking on any type of massage during your treatment.
- Protect your scalp from the sun by using a minimum of factor 30 even under head coverings. Chemotherapy may make your skin more sensitive than normal. ([Breast Cancer Now](#)) .
- Macmillan Cancer Support have advice on going on holiday, which has lots of advice from sun care to insect bites. "[Taking Care while on holiday](#)".
- If you decide to try a wig ensure a good fit by purchasing or seeking advice from a reputable company, such as [Trendco](#). We have found that there are lots of You Tube videos on how to position and wear a wig, which you might find useful.
- Wash your head coverings regularly, e.g., scarves, sleep hats, wigs.
- Be aware that your nasal hair may fall out, making you more susceptible to a runny nose. We recommend that you always have some tissues handy! Some petroleum jelly under the nostrils, this may help trap pollen. ([NHS](#)).
- You could lose your eyebrows and eye lashes. We suggest wearing sunglasses (if you do not already wear glasses) which can help protect your eyes generally.
- Radiotherapy induced hair loss
Radiotherapy can cause hair loss to the part of the body that is directed at, and regrowth will depend on the type of radiotherapy treatment you are receiving. A couple of useful websites include: [Cancer Research UK](#), [NHS](#), [Cancer Hair Care](#) .



SECTION FIVE

WHEN TREATMENT HAS FINISHED

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Hair may start to grow within a few weeks of finishing treatment and it is likely that you will have between one to two centimetres of growth by the end of the first three months ([Cancer Hair Care](#))

As your hair grows back after treatment you may find that it has changed and it may be curlier, finer or of a different colour. Hair usually grows back after chemotherapy, although you might find that it grows unevenly or in patches at first. These changes are rarely permanent.

- When hair regrowth starts, continue to treat your new hair and scalp gently.
- Hair re-growth after radiotherapy depends on the type and number of treatments you had, and the area of the body that was affected. If your hair grows back, it usually starts 3–6 months after treatment. It may be patchy, thinner or a different colour .¹

As your hair grows back

- Look after your new hair. Continue to use natural products and use shampoos and other products only if they do not irritate your scalp.
- There are many vitamins and herbs linked to improving hair regrowth. See [My New Hair](#) for further details and our post the [Good Hair Diet](#).
- Avoid heat from hairdryers and other heated products. Read our post on [Cold Water Massage](#).
- Choose a hairdresser who understands your situation.
- Book an appointment for a haircut with [Hair Reborn](#). This charity provides expert telephone advice and up to 3 free visits at a Hair Reborn appointed salon.

- Visit [My New Hair](#) to search for salons near you that are trained to support people affected by cancer.
- Seek professional advice before you colour or perm your hair, [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) suggest you wait until your hair is around 7.5 cm long and that your scalp is in a healthy condition before colouring. Always do a skin allergy test.
- Keep talking to your specialist cancer team, especially if you are having on-going treatment and you are worried about your hair regrowth.
- You may wish to donate your wig to [Wigbank](#) – a charity offering wigs at an affordable price.

¹ NHS Scotland <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/side-effects/hair-loss> (accessed 14/10/21)

There is no guarantee that hair lost through radiotherapy, will come back. In lower doses of radiation, the hair generally grows back in 3 to 6 months after the final radiation session. High doses of radiation may cause permanent damage to the hair follicles, resulting in hair not regrowing.

Unlike chemotherapy, which causes systemic (all-over) hair loss, radiation therapy only causes the hair in the specific area of treatment to fall out. If, for example, you receive radiation on your pelvis area, your pubic hair may fall out, but not the hair on your head. Radiation therapy to the brain is likely to cause the hair on your scalp to fall out.

**THANK YOU
FOR READING**

