

Managing Hair Loss

The following information is based on the general experiences of many prostate cancer patients. Your experience may be different. If you have any questions about what prostate cancer treatment services are covered by your health insurance, please contact your health care provider or health insurance provider.

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Please feel free to read only those parts of the booklet you need now. You don't need to read everything right now. You can always read more later.

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What Will I Learn By Reading This Booklet?

When you have **chemotherapy** (key-mo-ther-a-pee) to control your prostate cancer, you may have **side effects** or unwanted changes in your body. Side effects are different from person to person, and may be different from one treatment to the next. Some people have no or very mild side effects. The good news is that there are ways to deal with most of the side effects. In this booklet you will learn:

- Why you may lose your hair
- When you will start losing your hair
- When your hair will start growing back
- How to manage your hair loss

It is important for you to learn how to manage the side effects you may have from chemotherapy so that you can keep doing as many of your normal activities as possible.

Words that appear in **bold** (dark text) can be found in the “Key Words” section at the end of this booklet.

Why Does Chemotherapy Cause You To Lose Your Hair?

Hair loss is one of the most common side effects or unwanted changes in your body that can happen when you have chemotherapy to control your prostate cancer. It can be very upsetting. The important thing to remember is that your hair will grow back after your treatment ends.

Hair loss happens because the **anticancer** medicines you take can affect the healthy cells in your body, including the cells that make your hair grow. The amount of hair loss you have will depend on:

- The kind of chemotherapy medicine you are given
- How much chemotherapy medicine you get
- How you take your chemotherapy medicine

When Will I Start Losing My Hair?

Hair loss starts around two to three weeks after you start chemotherapy treatment. Your scalp may hurt at first. Then you may lose your hair, either a little at a time or in clumps. It takes about one week for all your hair to fall out.



How Much Hair Will I Lose?

There is no way to tell how much hair you will lose during your chemotherapy treatment. The chemotherapy medicines affect each person differently. Some people don't lose their hair. Other people find that their hair gets thinner. And, other people lose all their hair. Losing the hair on your head is most common.

You may also lose hair on your face including your eyelashes and eyebrows, your arms, legs, underarms, and pubic (groin) area between your legs.

Is There Anything I Can Do To Keep From Losing My Hair?

Right now, there is no medicine or treatment that will keep you from losing your hair during your chemotherapy treatment.

How Long Will It Take for My Hair To Grow Back?

The good news is that your hair will start growing back three to four months after your last chemotherapy treatment. Your hair may even grow while you are still taking your chemotherapy medicine. Some people find that their hair grows back differently. It may feel different. Some people who had straight hair before their chemotherapy treatment find that when their hair grows back it is curly. Your hair may also grow back a different color.

What Can I Do To Manage My Hair Loss?

Just as every cancer patient's treatment is different, the way each person responds to his treatment is also different. While one person may lose their hair, another may not. However, there are things you can do to help deal with this treatment side effect.

- Use mild shampoos.
- Don't wash your hair every day.
- Use soft hairbrushes.
- Use low heat if you blow-dry your hair.
- Do not treat your hair with chemicals, such as colors or perms.
- If you lose a lot of hair, be sure to use sunscreen and wear a hat to protect your scalp from sunburn.



- If hair loss bothers you, try a wig, hairpiece, scarf or hat. If you plan to buy a wig or hairpiece, buy it while you still have hair. The best time to choose your wig or hairpiece is before chemotherapy starts. This way, you can match the wig or hairpiece to the color and style of your hair. Make sure to choose a wig or hairpiece that feels comfortable and does not hurt your scalp. If you need help finding a place where you can get a wig or hairpiece, you can call the American

Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Line at 1-800-422-6237 to find out about cancer resources in your local community. If you would prefer to borrow rather than buy a wig or hairpiece, call your local American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or check with the social work department at your hospital. If you need a hairpiece because of your cancer treatment, it is a tax-deductible expense and may be covered by your health insurance. Be sure to check with your health insurance provider.

What Have I Learned By Reading This?

In this booklet, you learned about:

- Why you may lose your hair
- When you will start losing your hair
- When your hair will start growing back
- How to manage your hair loss

If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor or health care team. It is important that you understand what is going on with your prostate cancer treatment. This knowledge will help you take better care of yourself and feel more in control so that you can get the most from your treatment.

Key Words

Anticancer: medicines used in the treatment of cancer.

Chemotherapy (key-mo-ther-a-pee): a prostate cancer treatment, which treats your whole body with powerful anticancer medicines to kill many of your prostate cancer cells.

Side effects: unwanted changes in your body.