

MANAGING

Hair Loss

Definition/Causes:

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy may cause some or all of your hair to fall out. However, not all treatments will cause hair loss. Hair loss often starts two to three weeks after starting therapy. Regrowth takes three to six months after therapy is complete. Hair loss from chemotherapy usually occurs in the following pattern: scalp, eyebrows, eyelashes, beard, underarm hair and pubic hair. Hair loss from radiation depends on the area being treated.

What you can do:

It usually is not possible to prevent hair loss. However, there are some things you can do to lessen the distress of losing your hair.

- Think about cutting long hair short to avoid dramatic loss while showering or sleeping.
- You may want to sleep with a shower cap on at night two weeks after getting chemotherapy to catch hair that is falling out.
- Avoid harsh chemical treatments, perms and straighteners while getting chemotherapy, as they cause more breakage.
- Many insurances will pay for a wig with a doctor's prescription. Scarves, hats and wigs are available at the Positive Image CenterSM at City of Hope and the American Cancer Society.
- It is easier to match your hairstyle before losing your hair so try to shop early for a wig.
- Your hair not only keeps you warm but also covers your head to prevent sunburn. Wear sunscreen, hats or scarves when in the sun and in cold weather.

- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes against dust until your eyelashes regrow.
- Think about joining a support group to share your feelings about hair loss. The Sheri and Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center has support groups you can join.
- There are many programs such as City of Hope's Positive Image Center and the American Cancer Society's "Look Good, Feel Better" program which can help you with make-up tips and ways to minimize the changes from eyebrow/eyelash loss.

Hints for the caregiver to help manage hair loss and resources:

- See "Chemotherapy and You" booklet from the National Cancer Institute
- See "Turning Heads: Portraits of Grace, Inspiration and Possibilities" (available in the City of Hope Positive Image Center and gift shop)