

Alopecia

Alopecia is the partial or complete loss of hair. Hair loss may start about two weeks after the start of chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Most hair loss occurs on the scalp, but loss of eyelashes, eyebrows, and hair on other areas of the body is possible as well. It is important to take care of and protect the skin where hair loss has occurred. Talk to your healthcare team at any point before, during, and after treatment about any concerns with hair loss.

Signs and symptoms

- Hair becomes thin and may fall out completely.
- Hair loss may be on your head, eyebrows, eyelashes, face, arms, legs, underarms, and pubic area.
- Scalp may become dry, tender, or itchy.
- Hair may become dull and brittle.

Preparing for hair loss

- If your hair color is important, cut a sample to be matched at a later time.
- Have hair cut short before hair loss.
- Become familiar with hats, turbans, wigs, and hairpieces before losing your hair.
- Ask your healthcare team and insurance company about purchasing wigs.
- See our librarian for a listing of wig resources.

Taking care of your hair before hair loss

- Sleep on satin pillowcases (after hair loss you may want to return to cotton pillowcases).
- Do not wash your hair every day.
- When washing your hair, use baby, neutral, or gentle shampoo and a conditioner.
- After you rinse your hair, pat it dry with a towel.
- Use a soft hairbrush or a vented brush.
- Avoid using blow dryers, curling irons, hot rollers, or straighteners.
- Do not put your hair in tight braids and do not use hair ties.

Taking care of your skin after hair loss

- Use sunscreen on the scalp or any newly exposed skin (minimum of SPF 30) whenever you go outside.
- Wear a scarf and hat to protect your head from sunlight and temperature changes.
- Treat dry skin with moisturizers (Eucerin®, Keri®, Udderly Smooth®). These are over-the-counter in drugstores.
- If you lose your eyelashes, be sure to wear sunglasses anytime you are exposed to sunlight.
- If you are wearing a head covering, look for any blisters, rashes, or scratches. Talk to your healthcare team if you have any discomfort due to the use of a head covering.

What to expect when your hair grows back

About 2-3 months after you finish treatment, you may start to notice hair growth. Hair may look or feel different after treatment. Be sure to talk to your healthcare team about how to take care of your hair, and about the use of permanents, hair dyes, and hair relaxers.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.