

# Hair Loss

**Why does it happen?** Hair loss, or alopecia, happens because the chemotherapy affects all cells in the body, not just the cancer cells. The lining of the mouth and the hair follicles are especially sensitive because those cells multiply rapidly just like the cancer cells. The difference is that the normal cells will repair themselves, making these side effects temporary. There is no known way to prevent hair loss.

**When will it happen?** Hair loss may occur as early as the second week after the first cycle of chemotherapy, although it may not happen until after the second cycle. Hair loss can be sudden or slow.

**How will I lose my hair?** You may lose all of your hair or just some of it. How much depends on the drugs and dosages. Often it comes out in clumps rather than an even pattern. It is common for hair loss to include hair that grows anywhere including eyelashes, eyebrows, and pubic hair.

**Will it grow back?** In almost all cases your hair will grow back. It may take from three to six months after therapy is completed or it may start growing back while you are still receiving chemotherapy. Be prepared for your "new" hair to possibly have a slightly different color, texture, or curl.

## What you can do to manage

**Short hair** – Have your hair cut very short. A shorter style will make your hair look thicker and fuller and will make hair loss easier to manage if it occurs. Since hair often does not fall out evenly, some find losing short hair is less distressing. Some people shave their heads once the hair begins to fall out.

**Wigs** - If you are interested in purchasing a wig, the best time to do this is before you lose any hair. This helps the stylist create the best match. Some insurance companies will pay for a wig, so be sure you have it written as a prescription from your doctor (usually written as "cranial prosthesis").

**Caps and Scarves** - Some people find that the easiest and most comfortable options are caps and scarves. These range from items you may already own to custom items made expressly for people who are undergoing chemotherapy.

**American Cancer Society's "Look Good...Feel Better" free program** - Beauty professionals teach about makeup techniques, skincare, nail care, and options related to hair loss such as wigs, turbans, and scarves. Each participant receives a free cosmetic kit. Programs are held at a variety of times and locations, go to [www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org](http://www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org) or call 1-800-935-LOOK.

**Protect your scalp** - Use sunscreen on your scalp if you lose hair on your head, use a mild shampoo, a soft hairbrush, and use low heat when drying your hair.

## Wig Resources:

Almost Hair Unlimited	34732 Gladstone Place, Fremont <i>by appt only</i>	(510) 713-9447
Careda Wig Boutique	700 West Parr Ave. # G. Campbell <i>by appt only</i>	(408) 866-1077
New Hair Solutions	1370 Keenan Way, San Jose <i>by appt only</i>	(408) 371-4093
Paris Fashion Wigs	568 South Murphy Avenue Sunnyvale	(408) 737-2504
The Next Step ☆ ☆ ☆	15400 National Avenue Suite 120 Los Gatos	(408) 358-8433
Wig Palace	159 East 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue San Mateo	(650) 347-6125
Wig'n Out ☆ ☆ ☆	2220 S. Bascom Avenue, Campbell	(408) 377-7784
Yong's Fashion Wigs	25 East Santa Clara Street, San Jose	(408) 275-9747
TLC: on-line resource for purchasing soft hats, scarves, and wigs		<a href="http://www.tlcdirect.org">www.tlcdirect.org</a>