



cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345

How to Look Your Best During Cancer Treatment

Caring for your appearance can help you feel better about yourself. It's especially important when you are ill, because it can be harder to feel good about yourself when you're sick.

Along with routine hygiene, you might want to put extra time and energy into the way you look. Looking your best can help you feel more confident and in control.

What the patient can do

- Keep up with your regular grooming habits, such as shaving or putting on make-up, and combing your hair, even if you must stay in bed.
- If you'll need a wig or toupee, see the section called "[Hair loss](#)¹."
- Pamper yourself. Paint your nails, or buy something that makes you feel good. (Check with your cancer team first, especially before getting manicures, pedicures, or waxing in salons or spas.)
- Nails may start to separate from the nail bed during treatment. Keeping them short so that they don't catch on things may help.
- Nails may discolor during cancer treatment. Nail polish is usually OK, but check with your cancer team and plan to use a mild (non-acetone based) polish remover. Don't use artificial or glue-on nails during and for a few months after treatment.
- Use clean tools to gently cut, clean, and file nails. Push cuticles back rather than cutting them.
- Protect hands and nails with household gloves during chores to reduce exposure to soaps and cleaning agents. Use moisturizing creams after hand washing.
- Use an electric razor for routine shaving to prevent nicks and cuts.

- Exercise each day, as much as you can manage comfortably. Ask about an exercise plan. (See the section called “[Exercise²](#).”)
- Get enough rest.
- Keep up with regular mouth care. But you should talk with your cancer team before setting up dental cleanings or other procedures during treatment.

What caregivers can do

- When the patient is strong enough, encourage them to go on short outings they enjoy.
- Help the patient keep a supply of their preferred toiletries, lotions, and grooming supplies on hand.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/hair-loss.html
2. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/staying-active/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient.html

References

Fauci AS, Braunwald E, Kasper DL, et al (Eds). *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*, 17th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Medical, 2008.

Camp-Sorrell D, Hawkins RA. *Clinical Manual for the Oncology Advanced Practice Nurse*, Second Ed. Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 2006.

Cope DG, Reb AM. *An Evidence-Based Approach to the Treatment and Care of the Older Adult with Cancer*. Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 2006.

Houts PS, Bucher JA. *Caregiving*, Revised ed. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, 2003.

Kaplan M. *Understanding and Managing Oncologic Emergencies: A Resource for Nurses*. Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 2006.

National Comprehensive Cancer Network. *Prevention and Treatment of Cancer-Related*

Infections. Version 2.2014. Accessed at www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/infections.pdf on March 19, 2015.

Oncology Nursing Society. Cancer Symptoms. Accessed at www.cancersymptoms.org on April 3, 2013.

Ripamonti C, Bruera E. *Gastrointestinal Symptoms in Advanced Cancer Patients*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Varricchio CG. *A Cancer Source Book for Nurses*, 8th ed. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 2004.

Yarbro CH, Frogge MH, Goodman M. *Cancer Symptom Management*, 3rd ed. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 2004.

Last Medical Review: June 8, 2015 Last Revised: June 8, 2015

Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team
(www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html)

Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our Content Usage Policy (www.cancer.org/about-us/policies/content-usage.html).

cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345