

# What to Do for Hair Loss

Some cancer treatments cause people to lose some or all of their hair. Hair usually grows back, and there are things you can do to make it less of a problem for you.



## What causes hair loss in people with cancer?

Some types of chemotherapy can cause hair thinning or hair loss on the scalp.

Some also cause thinning or loss of pubic hair, arm and leg hair, eyebrows, or eyelashes. Other types of cancer treatment like radiation therapy to the head and hormone therapy can also cause hair loss or thinning.



## What can you do to prepare for hair loss?

- Ask your cancer care team if hair loss is likely and how quickly it will happen.
- Talk with your cancer care team about whether a cooling cap might help reduce your risk. More research is being done to learn whether cooling caps work and are safe. They can have some side effects, including headaches and discomfort from feeling cold. Talk with your cancer care team about their benefits, risks, and side effects.
- Wigs and other scalp coverings may be partially or fully covered by your health insurance. If so, ask your cancer care team for a wig or cranial prosthesis prescription.
- You might choose to cut your hair very short or even shave your head before it starts falling out.



## What can you do when you have hair loss?

- Your scalp may feel itchy or sensitive. Be gentle when brushing and washing your hair. Using a wide-toothed comb may help.
- Hair loss may be reduced by not brushing or pulling too much. Avoid making braids or ponytails, using rollers, blow drying, or using curling or flat irons.
- If your hair becomes very thin or is completely gone, be sure to protect the skin on your scalp from heat, cold, and sun. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher and wear a hat. In cold weather, wear a hat or scarf to cover your head and stay warm.
- When new hair starts to grow, it may break easily at first. Avoid perms and dyes for the first few months. Keep your hair short and easy to style.
- When your hair starts to grow back, it may be a different texture or color. Over time, it will likely go back to the way it was before treatment.
- Certain medicines and light therapy may help with hair loss and thinning. Ask your cancer care team if these treatments may work for you.



## When to talk with your cancer care team

Tell your cancer care team if you have trouble getting used to hair loss.



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org/hairloss](https://cancer.org/hairloss) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.