

Alopecia

Hair loss is a side effect of chemotherapy and radiation therapy to the scalp that is usually temporary. Chemotherapy results in atrophy (shrinking) of the hair follicle: the hair produced is weak and brittle. It either breaks off at the surface of the scalp or is spontaneously released from the follicle. Loss of scalp hair varies from slight thinning to complete baldness.

Activity:

1. Have haircut in an easy to manage style before treatment begins.
2. Use a mild protein-based shampoo and hair conditioner every 3-5 days, rinse well and pat dry.
3. Use a satin pillow or pillowcase to decrease hair tangles.
4. Select a wig in advance. A wig as close to possible to the color and style of your hair can be more easily selected before the hair loss occurs.
5. Begin to wear the wig before treatment begins. Adjusting to it is easier if it becomes a part of your lifestyle before hair loss occurs.
6. Check with your doctor-many wigs and hair pieces may be tax deductible for persons with cancer and some health insurance policies will reimburse the patient whose doctor has written a prescription for a wig. Check with your local American Cancer Society if you need a wig and can't afford one. Many provide wigs free of charge.
7. Use a hairnet to minimize shedding of hair in bed or on clothes.
8. Keep head covered in summer to prevent a severe sunburn and in winter to prevent hair loss.
9. Wear a hat/scarf/turban to conceal hair loss. Such accessories are attractive as well as stylish.

Remember:

1. Avoid using an electric hair dryer or use it only on the low setting.