

Hair Loss



Radiotherapy and chemotherapy can both cause hair loss.

After chemotherapy hair usually starts to grow back about 3 months after the end of treatment. It is very unusual for chemotherapy on its own to cause permanent hair loss although occasionally it does.

Radiotherapy causes hair loss when it is used to treat areas of the brain or head. Sometimes the dose of radiation damages the hair roots so that the hair doesn't grow back fully. Usually this only happens when the tumour lies close to the side of the head.

After low doses of radiation hair grows again about 3 months after the end of treatment. When the dose is higher the hair might grow back but more thinly than before and sometimes there are patches where the hair doesn't grow back at all. When chemotherapy and radiotherapy have to be given close together or at the same time the hair loss is worse than if radiotherapy is the only treatment.

What you can do to hide hair loss

There are several ways to try to hide areas of thin or absent hair with hats, scarves, bands, hair pieces or wigs. Hair weaving, where extra real or artificial hair is woven around the root of the hair has helped a lot of people to feel normal again but is expensive.

Hairdressers can be very helpful and it would be worth asking yours for their ideas.

Cancerbackup has produced a booklet (Coping with hair loss) with different ideas and the addresses of specialist hair dressers. You can contact them by phone

(0808 800 1234) to ask for a copy or go to their web site

www.cancerbackup.org.uk/ResourceSupport/Symptomssideeffects/Hairlossk.

People are often very upset about hair loss, although others prefer to shave everything off. There are lots of celebrities with no hair! People are much less likely to notice your hair than you are yourself, so if you can, try not to worry about it too much.

I didn't beat cancer to spend the rest of my life worrying!

Vanessa Moss

visit

www.aftercure.org for tips, advice and other useful websites

Keep a record of sites you find useful: