Hair loss during chemotherapy

Information and support



Supporting you to understand your options and prepare in a way that feels right for you.

Hair loss during chemotherapy

Your consultant or care team may have explained that your chemotherapy treatment is likely to cause hair loss. This can be difficult news to hear, and it is not unusual to feel overwhelmed.

This may be one of many pieces of information shared at a time when there is already a lot to take in, and it is not unusual to feel overwhelmed.

When you are coping with a diagnosis and the changes treatment may bring, including hair loss, there is no right or wrong way to feel. Some people feel able to manage it. Others find it harder.

You may find that your thoughts and feelings about hair loss change over time. However you respond, your feelings are valid. Some people want to prepare early, while others prefer to take things step by step or not think about it straight away.

You can take things at your own pace.

The impact of hair loss

Hair loss is not only about physical appearance. For many people, it is closely linked to:

- identity
- self care
- daily routines
- cultural or personal practices

Familiar habits such as washing, styling, or getting ready for the day can suddenly feel different or disrupted. Some people say hair loss can make them feel less like themselves. It can also change something that has always felt personal and familiar. It may also feel like a loss of privacy, especially if you wanted to keep your diagnosis private or share it only with certain people.

People respond in different ways. You might feel:

- uncertain or unsettled
- emotional at times
- overwhelmed
- practical and wanting to prepare
- not ready to think about it at all

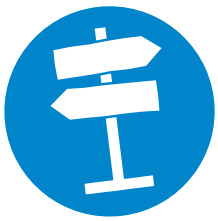
These feelings can change over time or from one day to the next.

Continued →

Registered Charity No. 1054015
tenovuscancercare.org.uk

tenovus cancer care
gofal canser

Your options



You have choices, and you can take your time with them. You may choose one option, combine a few, change your mind later, or choose not to use any of them.

Headwear

Scarves, wraps, hats, and turbans can be simple and comfortable options. Some people use them every day, at home, when resting, or alongside other choices.

Wigs



Wigs can be chosen to look similar to your own hair, to create a different style, or simply to feel comfortable for you. Some people prefer a natural-looking option, while others choose something different.

If you choose to look at wigs, people receiving oncology care in Wales are usually given an NHS voucher. You can use this to pay for a wig or to help with the cost, depending on the wig you choose.

Your care team can give you a list of approved suppliers and arrange a voucher if you decide a wig is right for you.

Scalp care

Your scalp may feel more sensitive during treatment. Gentle care and keeping the scalp clean and comfortable is often enough.

Cold capping

Cold capping may be offered during chemotherapy as an option to help reduce hair loss. It's not suitable for everyone, and experiences can vary. Your care team can explain whether it is appropriate for your treatment and what it may involve.

Preparing

You do not have to prepare straight away, but some people find it helpful to take small steps. Preparing can mean different things for different people. It may include practical steps, emotional support, or personal choices.

You might consider:

- giving yourself time to process how you feel about hair loss
- exploring options such as headwear, wigs, or cold capping, if and when you feel ready
- taking photos of your current hair if you'd like the option to replicate your colour, length, texture and preferred style
- cutting your hair shorter ahead of treatment, if this feels like a helpful step
- bringing someone you trust to appointments for support, or asking your care team what support is available
- choosing something in advance so it is there if and when you need it.

Continued →

What to expect at appointments

If you decide to explore your options further, appointments are there to support you.

They are usually:

- private and respectful
- centred around a conversation about your preferences and what feels right for you
- guided, but without pressure
- a space where you can ask questions and take your time

You may be shown some options or simply talk things through. You don't have to decide on the day.

Your voice matters

It is okay to:

- ask questions
- take your time
- say no
- ask to see other options
- change your mind

You do not need to know all the answers before an appointment. It can help to write down what matters most to you and, if you would like support, bring someone you trust or ask your care team what support is available.



Questions you may want to ask

- When is hair loss likely to start, and what changes might I notice first?
- Is cold capping suitable for my treatment, and what are the possible benefits and downsides?
- How do I access an NHS wig voucher, and which suppliers can I choose from?
- What can I do if my scalp feels sore, dry, itchy, or sensitive?
- Who can I contact if I have questions after this appointment?

The people you see are there to support you, listen to what matters to you, and help you make choices that feel right for you.

There is no right way to do this

People approach hair loss in different ways. Some may choose to wear a wig, others may prefer headwear, combine options, or decide not to cover their hair loss at all.

What matters most is finding an approach that feels comfortable and right for you.



A final note

You are navigating a lot, and it is okay if this feels significant. Take things one step at a time. You do not have to manage this on your own. Support is there when you need it.

Registered Charity No. 1054015
tenovuscancercare.org.uk

tenovus cancer care
gofal canser