



## Long term hair loss (alopecia)

Losing your hair and having minimal or no regrowth following cancer treatment can be a difficult, unexpected and an emotional experience. Some people find that this affects their confidence, sense of well-being and ability to cope with life after treatment. Many factors can contribute to long term hair loss (alopecia). Some of these factors are chemotherapy, age, family patterned baldness, stress and nutrition. This leaflet aims to show you what steps can be taken if your hair has not grown back and signposts you to additional support to help you cope with the effects of alopecia.

### First steps

If your hair has not started to regrow within six months following treatment you should inform your oncology team. Contact your clinical nurse specialist or speak to your oncologist at your follow up appointment.

Check that your oncology team will send a letter to your GP about your long term hair loss. It should recommend that your GP should make a dermatologist referral and an ongoing wig referral. It can be helpful if they send you a copy of this letter.

Your oncology team will notify the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) via their yellow card scheme, regarding the long term side effect of alopecia as a result of the drugs you received.

If you decide to make the report yourself, inform your oncology team and ensure you have all the details of the medications you have received. Go to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and enter MHRA in the search box. Click on 'Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency' and choose 'yellow card' from the list.

### What help is available?

#### Your GP

Your GP can refer you to a NHS dermatologist to see if there are any other underlying medical reasons why your hair is not growing back. A dermatologist may also be able to recommend some treatment that may help to stimulate new growth.

#### NHS wig/hair-piece referral

Your GP can refer you for a NHS wig/hair-piece. **It will be helpful for you to have the letter from your oncologist with you.** You can request a new wig whenever your current one needs replacing (normally every six months). Oncologists and/or cancer nurse specialists can give patients a direct wig referral to their hospital's NHS wig referral system for long term hair loss.

It can be helpful to have a copy of this sheet when discussing this with your GP.

#### Hair replacement specialist

There are a number of specialists (private, not NHS funded) that can offer bespoke hair systems and custom made wigs.

## Trichologists

A trichologist (private, not NHS funded) can carry out a number of tests to determine the cause and/or possible treatment options to stimulate new hair growth. They can also help people to find a wig or hair replacement specialist.

## Hairdresser

Some patients with long-term hair thinning may find that an experienced hairdresser can offer them a cut and colour that will help to disguise hair thinning.

## Specialist products

There are a number of specialist products available for hair thinning for example 'hair fibre', that is sprinkled amongst fine hair to make hair appear thicker, to sprays and lotions that may help.

## Grants

If you need help with wig costs, you may be eligible for a grant from a charity such as Macmillan or CURA. These grants are dependent on your current income. The Turn2Us website (see below) provides information about other grants.

(With thanks to Cancer Hair Care for contributions to the development of this information sheet.)

# Contacts

## Support and information

Alopecia.....	www alopeciaonline.org.uk
Cancer Hair Care .....	01438 311322 or www.cancerhaircare.com
Hair to Ware Ltd.....	01920 460099
Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre .....	020 3826 2555
My New Hair .....	www.mynewhair.org

## Grants

CURA grants .....	www.cura-uk.com
Turn2us.....	www.turn2us.org.uk
Macmillan Cancer Support .....	www.macmillan.org.uk

## Not-for-profit wig services

Wigbank .....	www.wigbank.com
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