



A Practical Guide to managing Cancer-related Afro Hair Loss

Written by Lorna Jones, Trichologist

C & Hair

At C & Hair We recognise that it is not just the physical experience of losing hair during cancer treatment that can cause distress but also the social and emotional impact that can affect a patient's quality of life. The significance of losing hair goes '*way beyond the scalp*'.

Eyebrows and eyelashes can also be affected, and as your appearance changes, you may be concerned about how others may view you and how you may view yourself. It may serve as a reminder of your cancer diagnosis and you may feel that you need to tell people about your cancer diagnosis, even if you don't really want to. This can be a challenging time.

C & Hair has a range of services that you can tap into to help manage your cancer-related hair loss concerns at various stages including pre-cancer treatment, during treatment or post-treatment.

These services include:

- Support Groups
- Hair Clinics
- Educational webinars
- Interactive workshops



Lorna Jones

Trichologist

If you live in Bexleyheath, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham or Southwark, have received a cancer diagnosis, are over the age of 18, have afro-textured hair and are worried about hair loss or scalp care, then please contact us at candhair@caringforhair.org


What can happen to hair because of cancer treatment?

Not all cancer treatments cause hair loss.

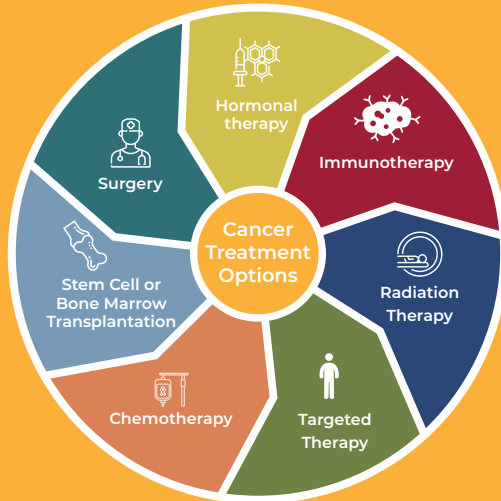
There are a variety of ways that hair can change when you have been treated for cancer:

- ✓ Hair may fall out completely
- ✓ Hair loss may be in patches
- ✓ Hair may grow back curlier or straighter
- ✓ Hair could grow back a different colour
- ✓ Hair may grow back unevenly
- ✓ Hair can become dry
- ✓ Hair can become weak and break easily
- ✓ You may develop an itchy/flaky scalp
- ✓ Your scalp may become tender or sore
- ✓ Hair may become thinner
- ✓ Hair all over your body may be affected

Your health care team will be able to advise you what you may experience following treatment.



Types of Cancer Treatment



Chemotherapy:

Hair loss (alopecia) is a common side effect of some chemotherapy medications. The condition is called Chemotherapy-Induced Alopecia (CIA) . However, not all types of chemotherapy cause hair loss as it depends on the dose of the medication, the treatment schedule and how it is given i.e. orally, intravenously, or topically.

Cells in the body grow and divide to form new cells, however cancer cells grow and divide faster than most normal cells. The chemotherapy medication works by attacking and destroying the cells in the body that divide quickly. Hair cells also grow quickly and therefore can also be attacked during treatment. This can result in the loss of hair.

Hair loss can begin within 2 weeks of treatment and in many cases it will only be temporary and can start to regrow within 3 - 6 months of the treatment ending

Hormonal therapy:

Hormonal therapy deprives the cancer cells of the hormones they need to survive. It is used to treat cancers that only grow in the presence of certain hormones.

Targeted Therapy:

Targeted therapy uses drugs that specifically target cancer cells by blocking the growth and spread of it.

Immunotherapy:

Immunotherapy uses a person's own immune system to fight cancer. The drugs strengthen the immune system to recognize cancer cells and destroy them.

Stem cell or bone marrow transplant:

Stem cell transplants are used to replace bone marrow cells that have been destroyed by cancer.

Radiotherapy:

Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays to destroy cancer cells in a particular area. Hair is affected on the part of the body where the radiation takes place. For example, if radiation takes place on the leg, then the hair in that area will be affected. It will not affect your hair on your scalp. Scalp hair is affected if radiation is taking place near the neck and head.

Surgery:

Surgery is used to treat cancer which is found in a part of the body and is a specific growth and can be removed.

Preparing for your cancer treatment

The C & Hair Support groups will be a useful forum to talk to people who are going through or have been through the same thing. It will be an opportunity to exchange tips on how to cope with what to expect and what may have helped them.

The Hair Clinics will also give you the opportunity to have an individual consultation where you can explore your options including head coverings i.e. wigs, headscarves, hats, etc. Some may choose to obtain these before treatment begins.

You may wish to consider your current hairstyle prior to and during treatment. See the list of common hairstyles later on in this guide. You will also be able to pick up some more information about scalp cooling, if your doctor has offered this as an option as part of your treatment. You may also want to pick up some hair care advice.

If your doctor has told you that you may lose hair, you may have questions about the type and severity of hair loss. Some people decide to cut their hair prior to treatment and keep it short. Others may choose to shave their head completely.

We have put together a list of useful questions that you can take along with you to your appointment with your Oncologist. They are at the end of this guide.

During your cancer treatment

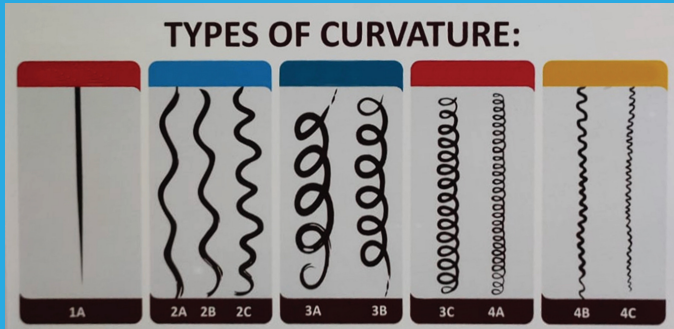
The Support group meetings will be a mixture of face- to- face and online sessions, so you may wish to join online at any time you feel able to. Webinars will also be held periodically online on different topics so that you can always listen in and ask any questions. All concerns regarding your hair and scalp should be directed to your health care team during treatment.

Post-cancer treatment:

Following treatment, you may have concerns about hair loss or hair regrowth, or questions about your scalp. You may also have questions about how to care for your new hair, following regrowth.

Afro-textured Hair:

Hair ranges from straight hair to very curly hair. A hair typing system has been used to classify hair to understand the needs of each different hair type. Afro-textured hair is curly.



Afro Hairstyle trends:

There are a variety of hairstyles that men and women wear and below are some of the most common ones often seen within the afro-textured hair community.

Although some of them may appear to be 'low maintenance' styles they may not be suitable during your treatment, particularly if your doctor has advised that your treatment may cause hair loss as a side effect.



Braids

Braids are formed by using three sections of hair and weaving them together. Using additional hair is woven into it giving it additional volume and length.

Within the braid family of hair styling, there are box braids, crotchet braids and knotless braids – all using a different technique to produce a variation of braided finishes.

Plaits

Plaits are a type of braid. They are created by using three sections of hair, which are woven together and hang down from the scalp.

Cornrows

Cornrows are made by using three sections of hair which are woven together directly onto the scalp.

Twists

Twists are created when two sections of hair are woven together.

- Two stranded twists hang down from the scalp
- Flat twists are woven onto the scalp

Weaves/extensions

The purpose of a weave is to add volume and sometimes length to hair. Synthetic or human hair is added to existing hair by:

Sew-ins

Hair extensions are added to hair by sewing a weft of hair onto existing cornrows using a needle and thread. Another method of doing this is to sew a hair net to the cornrows and add in the extensions by sewing them onto the hair net.

Glue

Hair extensions can be glued onto the scalp in between hair that has previously been braided.

Clip-ons or taped-in

Additional hair can be clipped on or attached by using tape.

Locs/locks

Locs can be formed when sections of hair is rolled or twisted from the scalp to the tip of the hair and is left uncombed over an extended period of time, so that it is matted together.

Traditional locs can be worn by both men and women.

Micro-locks are tiny locks (known as Sisterlocks for women and Brotherlocks for men) are formed by using an interlocking tool.



Chemical relaxers

The application of chemical products to straighten hair.

Scalp cooling:

Scalp cooling uses cold caps to lower the temperature of your scalp and the main aim is to prevent hair loss caused by chemotherapy.

By cooling the scalp, it constricts the blood vessels that carries the blood and other substances to the hair follicles. Hair follicles produce and contain the hair shaft, which is the hair we see on our scalp. In slowing the blood flow, it limits the amount of circulating chemotherapeutic drugs that reaches the hair follicle which will prevent significant hair loss or reduce the amount of hair that is lost through chemotherapy.

In the past, frozen ice packs were used, however modern systems use computers to control the temperature of the cap which is placed on your scalp. The cap is connected to a cooling system and a coolant fluid travels through the cold cap to lower the temperature and maintain it at this level during treatment.

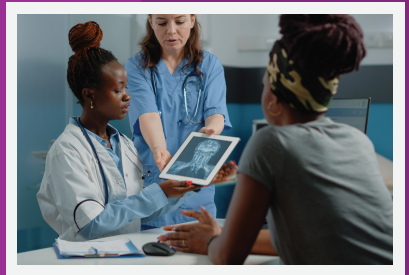
You will need to wear the cap just before treatment to pre-cool the scalp, during chemotherapy and for a short period following treatment.

It is not suitable for use in all types of cancer treatment. However, your Oncologist will advise if this is something that you can be offered.

Will I lose my hair?

If you are going through cancer treatment and are worried about hair loss, your Oncologist will be able to advise you what you could expect. Here is a list of questions that you might find useful to ask at your appointment:

1. Will this treatment cause hair loss?
2. If so, what type of hair loss:
 - a. Will I lose all my hair,
 - b. Will it be patchy hair loss or
 - c. Will it cause thinning?
3. If so,
 - a. When will it start?
 - b. Will it happen quickly or gradually
4. Will my hair grow back after treatment?
5. If so, how long after treatment will it take?
6. Are there treatments to help me manage it or minimise it?
7. What are scalp-cooling devices and how do they work?
8. Do you recommend it for me?
9. Are there any side-effects of using cooling caps?
10. What options are available for me to help me cope with hair loss?
11. Am I entitled to a free wig?
12. Can you recommend any scalp products or shampoos I could use?
13. Will I lose hair from any other part of my body?
14. If I'm not expected to lose my hair, can I carry out any chemical processes including colouring, bleaching, perming or relaxing my hair?



Medical disclaimer:

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Macmillan Cancer Support run a helpline, 7 days a week between 8am -8pm. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00



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