Breast cancer and hair loss

Treatment and side effects
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Introduction

Many people will lose either some or all of their hair as a result of treatment for breast cancer. For some, this is the most distressing side effect of treatment.

You may feel that your hair is an important part of how you feel about yourself and losing it may affect your confidence and self-esteem. Some people find that being prepared for hair loss before it occurs helps them cope better when it happens.

This booklet explains how you may lose your hair and the effect it can have on you. It looks at caring for your hair and scalp during and after treatment, and discusses wigs, scarves and other kinds of headwear. There are ideas for different ways of tying scarves, plus a guide to pencilling in eyebrows and applying false eyelashes. We suggest hints and tips you may want to try to take the focus away from your hair. We discuss what happens when your hair grows back and how to look after it.

The experience of hair loss, scalp and hair care and hair regrowth will be different for everyone. There are also differences according to European, Indian, African, Middle-Eastern and Asian hair types. Getting individual advice can be the most helpful. This may be from your breast care nurse or one of the specialist organisations and suppliers listed towards the end of the booklet.

Although this booklet is aimed mainly at women, men who have lost their hair while being treated for breast cancer may find some of the information useful.
Breast Cancer Care’s HeadStrong service

Our HeadStrong service provides practical support and information about hair loss for people who are likely to lose their hair, or have already lost it, through treatment for cancer.

The free one-to-one HeadStrong sessions aim to give you:

- practical tips on caring for your hair and scalp before, during and after your treatment
- the opportunity to try on different types of headwear, providing an alternative to wearing a wig
- more confidence in your appearance
- information on hats, scarves and hairpieces and where to get them.

You can book your HeadStrong session before you start to lose your hair or at any time during treatment. For information about HeadStrong and for services in your area:

- see page 45
- contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre (details at the back of this booklet)
- call the Helpline on 0808 800 6000.

‘Even though I knew my hair was going to fall out, it still was a shock and quite upsetting to see it happen.’

Annmarie
How you may feel

For many of us, the way we feel about ourselves is closely linked to the way we look, and so losing your hair can be devastating. You may feel angry and unhappy that this has happened in addition to your cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Some people tell us they feel guilty about being upset when they lose their hair as they feel there are other, more important things to worry about. There’s no right or wrong way to feel. Hair loss is such a visible side effect of treatment and can change how you look and view yourself. Hair loss may also make you feel vulnerable and exposed. You may see it as a constant reminder of your treatment, labelling you as a ‘cancer patient’. Some people find that they adjust quickly to hair loss. For others, this can take longer, or they may always find it difficult to accept and adapt to.

‘It was one of the most emotional parts of my journey. I reacted more than I did at the time of diagnosis. This really surprised me!’

Eithne
In some cultures and religions hair has a particular significance. If hair has a special significance for you, losing it may affect your cultural or religious identity as well as your body image or self-esteem, making it even more difficult to come to terms with. If you are finding these feelings overwhelming speak to your breast care nurse or a member of your specialist team.

While some people describe hair loss as the most difficult side effect to deal with, others find that the experience of losing their hair isn’t as upsetting as they thought it would be. If there’s a chance that you will lose your hair, your chemotherapy or breast care nurse will talk to you before treatment starts about what might happen. As well as talking about practical issues such as caring for your scalp or wearing a wig, you can also discuss your feelings about losing your hair and look at ways to help you adjust to it.

Each person will find their own way of dealing with hair loss, but it can be helpful to talk to others who have been through the same experience. You can ring our free Helpline on 0808 800 6000 to be put in touch with someone through our Someone Like Me service who’s experienced hair loss and understands what you may be facing. You can also read what other people say about it on our online Forum at www.breastcancercare.org.uk You may also meet other people having treatment at the hospital or at a breast cancer support group.

‘I had very beautiful long hair, so losing my hair was really upsetting, actually. I don’t know why, but I found it more upsetting than losing my breast.’

Ameera
Other people’s reactions

It’s up to you who you tell about losing your hair. Some people tell just their family and close friends, while others are happy to let everyone know.

People will respond to you losing your hair in different ways, and you may find some reactions difficult to deal with. Be prepared for the possibility that not everyone will be as supportive as you’d like, and that this can be hurtful. But lots of people will be supportive, so try not to withdraw from your friends or your social life.

Talking to your children

If you have children, of whatever age, you may wonder what to tell them about your breast cancer. Studies have shown that children are less anxious if they know what’s happening, and that it can be less frightening for them to know what is going on even if they don’t fully understand. Even though you may find it difficult, in most cases talking with your children about your breast cancer will help them and you.

Your children may find it upsetting to see you without any hair and it might help if you prepare them for the fact that this may happen. Tell them what, if anything, you are going to wear on your head and let them know hair loss is rarely permanent. You may find it helpful to read our Talking with your children about breast cancer booklet. If you have young children you may find our story book Mummy’s Lump useful. We also have a book for older children – Medikidz explain breast cancer – which is aimed at children aged 8–15.
Treatments and hair loss

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is a treatment that uses anti-cancer (also called cytotoxic) drugs. The chemotherapy drugs also damage healthy cells, including the cells in the hair follicles, which is why they can make your hair fall out. This can include your body hair including eyebrows, eyelashes and pubic hair as well as the hair on your head.

Not all chemotherapy drugs make your hair fall out. Some drugs don’t cause any hair loss, some cause hair to thin, while others make hair fall out completely. How much hair you lose will depend on the type of drugs you are given and the dose. Your specialist or your chemotherapy nurse will talk to you about your treatment and how likely you are to lose your hair.

The hair loss caused by chemotherapy is almost always temporary so your hair will start to grow back once your treatment is over. Sometimes your hair may start to grow back before you’ve finished your full course of chemotherapy. In a very small number of people the hair can take more time to grow back, and for some people permanent hair loss has been reported following chemotherapy.

The organisation Cancer Hair Care produces a booklet which explains in more detail the hair loss and regrowth cycle. Their contact details are on page 43 of this booklet.
Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy uses high-energy x-rays to treat cancer. Like chemotherapy, it also affects healthy cells, but only in the specific area being treated. This means that you will only lose hair from that area. If you’re having radiotherapy to the lymph glands in your armpit as well as your breast you’ll lose underarm hair in the part that has been treated. Men may lose chest hair from the part of their chest that has been treated. If you are having radiotherapy to the head, you will lose some or all of your hair from there. Radiotherapy to the head is only given to people with secondary breast cancer (breast cancer that has spread to another part of the body) in the brain. The radiographer or breast care nurse will talk to you about the likelihood of you losing your hair before treatment starts.

After radiotherapy the hair on the area treated will usually grow back.

You may find that the regrowth is patchy, and it can take several months to grow back completely. If you have radiotherapy to the head, your hair may grow back a different colour, or become curly when it used to be straight. It’s also possible that the hair may not grow back at all. This will depend on the dose of radiotherapy and the number of treatments you’ve had.

Hormone (endocrine) therapy

Taking hormone therapy such as tamoxifen, anastroxole (Arimidex), exemestane (Aromasin) or letrozole (Femara) can sometimes cause hair thinning. This is usually mild and might only occur for a short time although in some cases, it can continue throughout treatment which can be many years. People don’t always tell their specialist team about hair thinning when they’re having hormone therapy so it’s difficult to say how common this is.

Once treatment is finished, your hair should grow back. In the meantime, see ‘Looking after your hair during treatment’ on page 16 for ideas on caring for your hair while you are taking hormone therapy.
Preventing hair loss

If you are having chemotherapy, cooling the scalp can sometimes prevent or reduce hair loss from the head. This technique works by reducing the blood flow to the hair follicles, which means that the amount of drugs reaching the hair follicles is also reduced.

The effectiveness of scalp cooling varies depending on the drug and dose used, and from person to person.

There are two widely available ways of cooling the scalp. One method uses a cold cap, which is a hat filled with a gel that can be chilled. The other system uses a small, refrigerated cooling machine to pump a liquid coolant through the cap. In both cases the cap is worn before, during and after chemotherapy, so scalp cooling can mean you’re at the hospital for longer. It’s important the cap covers the scalp snugly otherwise there may be patches of hair loss.

If you keep your hair, you may find that it’s patchy or thinner.

You may find the cap uncomfortable, as it’s very cold and often quite heavy. Some people experience headaches, but these usually wear off quickly once the cap is removed.

Results of scalp cooling with African and Caribbean hair seem less successful so increased cooling times may be recommended.

You can ask your specialist or chemotherapy nurse if scalp cooling is available and whether it would be suitable for you. The condition of your hair and any previous use of chemicals on it may affect how well scalp cooling works. Your chemotherapy nurse will discuss this with you.

Nothing can be done to prevent hair loss during radiotherapy.
Looking after your hair during treatment

If chemotherapy doesn’t cause your hair to fall out, it may make it brittle, dry or straw-like, so it’s a good idea to treat your hair as gently as possible. Hormone therapy can also cause the hair to thin.

Due to its structure, African and Caribbean hair is the most vulnerable to damage of all hair textures so special care and using specific products is recommended.

The following tips may be helpful for all hair types.

- Try not to wash your hair for about two days after chemotherapy, especially if having scalp cooling.
- Use a mild, unperfumed shampoo and conditioner.
- Try not to wash your hair more than twice a week.
- Use warm rather than hot water.
- Pat your hair dry rather than rubbing it.
- Brush or comb your hair gently with a soft hairbrush or wide-toothed plastic comb.

‘I wasn’t given any advice about caring for my scalp or what to do when my hair grew back. I didn’t know what to do, so I went to a black hair shop and found some products I thought would help me to care for my scalp.’

Janet
• Avoid plaiting or braiding it as this may damage your hair.
• Avoid using elastic bands to tie back long hair.
• Avoid any hair colours and dyes, perms, relaxers and other products containing strong chemicals.
• Avoid products containing alcohol, such as hairspray, which can irritate the scalp
• Avoid excessive heat from hair straighteners, hairdryers, hot brushes and heated rollers.
• Massaging the scalp may help by improving the blood supply to the hair follicles.
• Avoid hair extensions and weaves as these can also cause the hair to weaken.
• Hair thinning, poor condition or a dry and itchy scalp can also be related to poor diet, stress and alcohol. Changes to your diet and lifestyle may help improve the condition of your hair.

‘I treated my scalp and hair very gently. I wash my scalp with the face wash product I normally use. When my hair started to grow back, I used baby shampoo and did not rub my scalp hard. I patted it dry and still don’t rub my hair with the towel, just pat. Some areas of hair seemed to grow more quickly than others.’
If you lose your hair

Hair loss will usually begin gradually within two or three weeks of starting treatment. For some people it may be more sudden. Your scalp might feel tender as the hair thins and falls out.

The first signs that you are losing your hair may be finding hair on the pillow in the morning or extra hair in your hairbrush. This can still be a shock and very distressing even when you’re prepared for it to happen. Wearing a soft hat or turban in bed to collect loose hairs might help.

You might want to think about having your hair cut short (or you may even decide to shave it off completely) before your treatment starts.

Some people ask about donating their hair if they have it cut off before losing it. There are organisations and companies that collect hair to make into wigs for others. See page 44 for contact details.

Scalp care

- Remember to protect your scalp from the sun. Cover your head when in the sun or use a high protection factor suncream at all times, as the scalp is particularly sensitive.
- We lose a lot of heat from our heads so cover your scalp in colder weather.
- If your scalp is dry, flaky or itchy you can use unperfumed moisturiser or natural oils such as almond or olive oil to help with this. You may prefer to use aromatherapy oils, but it is best to consult a trained aromatherapist, as the oils can be very strong.

Body hair

You may also lose some or all of your body hair, including eyebrows, eyelashes, nose hair, underarm (and chest hair for men) and pubic hair. This can be a shock, especially if you’re not prepared for it.

Avoid perfumed deodorants if you’ve lost hair under your arms from chemotherapy, as they can irritate the skin but you can use a non-perfumed deodorant.
What to wear?

Many people choose to wear wigs, scarves, hats or other headwear until their hair grows back. There are many different reasons for this, from keeping warm, for cultural or religious reasons, to concern about what other people might say.

Different people prefer to wear different things – just choose what you feel comfortable with at the time. You might want to wear a wig on special occasions or when going out, but feel more comfortable wearing a cap around the house. Or you might prefer not to wear anything.

Wigs

Modern wigs are natural looking and comfortable. They can be made from real or synthetic hair or a mixture of both, and are available in many different colours and styles.

At the time of printing, you may be entitled to a free synthetic wig on the NHS if:

- you are an in-patient when the wig is supplied
- you or your partner are receiving Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- you are entitled to or named on an NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate
- you are named on an HC2 certificate.

Some hospitals may provide you with a free wig whether or not you meet any of the conditions above. To find out if you’re entitled to a free wig, talk to a healthcare professional as it varies according to where you live in the UK.

You may be entitled to a new wig on the NHS every six months if necessary. Your chemotherapy or breast care nurse should be able to advise you on how to go about getting your wig.

If you aren’t entitled to a free wig you can still get one through the NHS at a subsidised rate. To apply for this you’ll need an HC1 form, which you can get from your hospital or from the NHS Business Services Authority website www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HealthCosts/1128.aspx
If you’re having treatment as a private patient the cost of a wig may be covered in your policy, if not you’ll need to pay for a wig.

Only wigs made of synthetic hair are available on the NHS, so if you’d prefer a wig made of real hair you’ll need to pay for it. Real hair wigs are usually more expensive and can be time consuming to maintain. If you’re not feeling well during treatment, you may find this more difficult. As a rough guide, synthetic wigs cost around £60 upwards, while real hair wigs can cost much more.

Some hospitals have specialists who may be able to fit you with a wig or advise you about other wig suppliers. Choosing and being fitted with a wig can be a time when you have to face the reality of losing your hair, and it can be an upsetting experience. The wig specialists understand this and will do their best to make you feel at ease.

Your hospital may have a limited range, so if you’re paying for your wig yourself you may prefer to go to a hairdresser, department store, wig retailer or theatrical costumier. This is usually more expensive. Our ‘Headwear, wig and eyelash suppliers’ section has details of a range of wig suppliers. See page 38 for more information.

You don’t have to pay VAT (Value Added Tax) on a wig when hair loss is caused by cancer treatments. You will need to complete a VAT exemption form – which most stores will provide at the time of purchase – and send it off. The tax can’t be claimed back at a later date.

Financial help towards the cost of a wig may be available from Macmillan Cancer Support (see page 44) but your doctor, nurse or social worker will need to apply on your behalf.

**Choosing a wig**

- Take a relative or friend with you to support you and help you choose.
- If it’s important to you to match your wig to your hair colour and style, you may want to choose one before your hair actually falls out. Or you may decide to have a complete change.
- Real hair wigs can be cut and styled to make it look more natural and feel more personal. The hair in some wigs is packed very densely, which can give a slightly unnatural look. This can be thinned out by trained hair professionals to make the wig look like your own hair. (It’s a good idea to check that your hairdresser or wig consultant has experience of cutting wigs. You can also try www.mynewhair.org for wig cutting salons in your area.)
• If you haven’t yet lost your hair the wig should be quite tight when fitted so that it gives a good fit later on. This can be adjusted later if needed.
• Synthetic wigs are light and easy to care for. They’re often pre-styled and can be washed and left to drip dry. They’re also cheaper than real hair wigs. Real hair wigs need to be handled more carefully and may need professional cleaning and restyling.

Wearing a wig
• As long as your wig fits snugly, it shouldn’t move around your head. However, if you’re worried about your wig slipping or falling off, try securing it with hypoallergenic double-sided tape, which is available from wig suppliers. One side of the tape sticks to the inside of the wig while the other side sticks to your scalp. A wig specialist can also talk to you about other ways of securing your wig.
• Wigs can sometimes feel hot and itchy. You can try wearing a thin cotton lining or skullcap under your wig. You can buy these from wig suppliers or make your own from a cut down stocking or pair of tights.
• If you have an ‘off-the-shelf’ wig and wear it every day it will last about three to four months. After that the elastic gets looser and this affects the fit, although it may be possible to replace the elastic. You may be entitled to a new wig on the NHS every six months if necessary.
• If you need to get undressed, for example at the doctors or while out shopping for clothes, wear something that’s easy to slip off rather than something that goes over your head.
• Avoid excessive heat or steam (such as from an oven or iron) if you have a synthetic wig as it can make the hair shrivel. Don’t get too close to flames from cookers or candles, which can melt synthetic hair and frizz real hair.
**Other headwear**

Whether or not you wear a wig, there may be times when you want to cover your head. Hats, scarves and turbans can be found in a wide variety of styles and colours and can help you feel more confident about the way you look. They can also keep you warm in winter and protect your head from the sun in summer.

Our HeadStrong service can show you different ways of tying scarves and a selection of suitable hats and other accessories. See page 6, call our free Helpline on 0808 800 6000 or ask your breast care nurse about services in your area.

**Scarves and bandanas**

Scarves and bandanas (a triangular or square piece of cloth) can be worn in many different ways to create a variety of looks. Choose different colours, patterns and textures to suit your mood and co-ordinate your headwear with your outfit. Our HeadStrong service can provide a free scarf and silk tie at your appointment. See page 6 for more information.

The most comfortable scarves are made from a natural fabric that’s gentle on the scalp and allows it to breathe. Soft cotton is probably best, as satin and silk materials can slide off the head more easily.

**Different looks with scarves**

For a basic headwrap you will need a scarf at least 75cm x 75cm. For more elaborate styles it needs to be 100cm x 100cm. The following pages will show you how to tie a basic headwrap.
How to make a basic headwrap

• Lay a square scarf flat with the wrong side facing you. Fold the scarf diagonally into a triangle.

• Place the scarf on your head with the folded edge about 2.5cm below your natural hairline and the points at the back.

• Tie the outer two points into a double knot behind your head over the middle triangle point (if you are doing more than the basic headwrap you may only need a single knot).

• The flap of fabric should be underneath the knot. Pull any excess scarf from under the knot.

• Now you have a basic headwrap, you can experiment with different looks and styles.
**Tips**
To give more height and a better head shape you can:

- scrunch or pleat the long edge of the scarf
- roll the edge of the scarf around a 25cm long foam tube (like a finger bandage) before putting it on your head
- place a foam shoulder pad on the crown of your head under the scarf. You can attach it with double-sided tape available from wig shops.

‘There’s lots of Muslims round here, so a lot of the girls wear scarves anyway. It was much easier walking out with a headscarf on and not worrying about people looking at me’.

Fatima
Variations

• Wear the ends of the scarf loose – particularly if it’s sunny or if you’re going to wear a hat on top.

• Twist the three ends together – it will look like a twisted rope – and wrap tightly around the knot for the look of a bun or rosette. Secure the loose ends by tucking them through the centre of the bun.

• Tie the ends of the scarf in a bow or gather all the ends in an elasticated ponytail band to help make loops and tails to form a bow.

• For a different twist, pull all three ends together and tuck securely over and under the knot to give the illusion of a French hair roll (see page 29).
• Twist the long ends separately.

• Bring them forward and tie them at the front of your head.

• Continue twisting and tucking the ends in around your head.

• At the back, twist the short end and tuck it in.

**Tips**
You may find it helps to twist one end at a time and secure it with a hairgrip, paperclip or elastic band while you twist the other one.

You can vary this by twisting in coloured cord, beads or a contrasting scarf to match what you’re wearing.
**Hats**
When looking for a hat, you may want to choose a style that can be pulled down to cover your hairline. As well as specialist hat shops and department stores, wig and headwear suppliers also stock suitable hats. You can also buy hats and caps with detachable hair pieces.

**Turbans**
Cotton or jersey turbans are light, comfortable and easy to wash. They can be bought in some department stores, chemists, hospital shops and from wig and headwear suppliers.

**Fringes**
If you normally have a fringe, you may feel that you still don’t look right no matter what headwear you choose. Worn under a scarf or hat, you may find that a fringe on a Velcro band works for you. Fringes can be trimmed and shaped to suit and are available from wig suppliers.

You can also buy hairpieces that you can fix under the back of a hat. They give the appearance of hair and, like the fringes, can be styled to suit you.

For more information, visit the My New Hair website www.mynewhair.org

We’ve listed a range of suppliers of hats, turbans and fringes on page 38.

‘I mostly wore a tight-fitting plain scarf (black or white) and then on top (around the edge) I would tie a thinner long scarf that I co-ordinated with the colours I was wearing.’

*Carol*
Eyelashes and eyebrows

Losing your eyelashes and/or eyebrows can be upsetting, especially if you’re not expecting it to happen. Some people don’t lose their eyebrows or eyelashes, other people’s eyebrows may thin, and others lose them completely.

Eyelashes

If you lose your eyelashes you might find that your eyes get sore easily. If your eyes are inflamed ask your chemotherapy nurse for some drops to help reduce the soreness.

You can use eyeliner to draw along the top of your eyelid to give the illusion of lashes. Choose eyeliner either the colour of your own lashes or a contrasting colour that goes with your skin tone.

If your eyes aren’t feeling sore or sensitive you may want to try false eyelashes, including single lashes, but check first with your chemotherapy nurse. Some people can be allergic or sensitive to the adhesive used to keep the eyelashes in place.

False eyelashes come in many different styles, lengths and thicknesses. You could choose eyelashes that are similar to your own, or try ones that are completely different. Make-up counters in department stores are a good source of help, or try your local beauty salon.

Eyelash extensions (usually applied in a salon and designed to last longer than eyelashes you apply yourself) are not recommended.

Eyelashes can be quite patchy when they start to grow back. They may take up to a year to grow back fully although they will usually grow back in about six months.
**Eyebrows**

If you lose your eyebrows, or find that they are thinner, you may be very conscious of how this alters the way you look. You can recreate a natural appearance by using eyebrow make-up in a shade that matches your original hair colour.

There are all kinds of eyebrow products available from the major cosmetic companies – from eyebrow shapers and finishers to pencils, pens and powders. Make-up counter staff in department stores and chemists will be happy to give you a demonstration and advise you on the most suitable products for your skin type and colour.

Stick-on eyebrows for people experiencing hair loss are also available in a range of shades and shapes. These have been developed for people who have hair loss for other reasons and not specifically for those experiencing hair loss from chemotherapy treatment. Chemotherapy can cause skin changes and sensitivity so the adhesive may cause irritation. Ask your breast care nurse or chemotherapy nurse if there is anything in the adhesive that is likely to cause irritation. You may also want to test the adhesive on a small area of skin first to check for any reactions.

Look Good Feel Better is an organisation offering a two-hour, free of charge skincare and make-up workshop to help women with the visible side effects of treatment. These workshops are held in hospitals and cancer care centres throughout the UK and cater for women with different skin tones.

You can find your nearest workshop through their website www.lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk or by calling 01372 747500.

‘The worst bit was losing my eyebrows as I felt like my face just looked like a balloon. I was very lucky that my friend knew how to draw them on and she showed me what to do.’

Natalie
Changing the emphasis

Some people feel more confident if attention is directed away from their hair and their head. There are a number of ways of doing this that might help.

- Jewellery such as earrings, necklaces, rings and brooches can attract attention.
- You could experiment with make-up, using different colours to emphasise your eyes or lips.
- Finding an item of clothing that gives you confidence – a jacket, shoes or a bag – can also attract attention.
When your hair grows back

Your hair will almost always start to grow back once your treatment is over, and sometimes it may even start to grow back before you finish treatment. It may be weak and fragile or softer to begin with but over time the condition and texture of hair becomes stronger.

Hair can sometimes grow back differently to what it was before treatment.

- The colour may change.
- The texture may be different.
- It may be curlier.
- It may be straighter.

This change may only be temporary but for some it will be permanent. For some women, having hair grow back differently to what they are used to can be very difficult. You may feel it is another change to your appearance that you need to cope with especially, if in the short term, you’re not able to treat or style your hair in the way you always have.

The rate of hair growth varies from person to person but most people will have a full covering of hair after about three to six months, although for some people this can be patchy. Many women wonder if there are any particular hair products that will speed up the growth. There’s no evidence that supports any particular product or supplement for speeding up hair growth.

The condition of our hair is strongly linked to lifestyle factors including diet. A healthy diet that is balanced and varied provides all the nutrients needed for healthy hair. You can find out more about a healthy diet from our booklet Diet and breast cancer and our DVD Eat well, keep active after breast cancer.

Other hair, such as your eyebrows and eyelashes, may grow back more quickly or more slowly than the hair on your head.
While your hair is growing back it will be very delicate and liable to break easily. You need to treat it with care. You might find the tips on page 16 useful. You can also talk to a hairdresser about how best to look after your hair.

It’s best to wait until you hair is longer and your hair and scalp are in good condition before applying a colour or other chemical treatments to it. For some people this may be six months to a year, for others it will be sooner.

Before colouring your hair talk to a hairdresser about the best product for you. They may recommend henna or vegetable-based dyes as these are gentler on the hair and scalp.

Any colour should be tested on your skin and hair (strand test) even if it’s a product you used before losing your hair. This is to make sure you don’t react to it and it achieves the result you want. You should also have a patch test on your skin to make sure you don’t have a skin reaction to the dye.

You may also find there is an in-between period when your hair is growing back but you aren’t quite ready to go out with your own hair. You may choose to continue wearing a wig or other headwear until your hair is longer.

Donating your wig

Once you no longer need your wig you can donate it to an organisation called Wig Bank. See page 42 for details.

“When my hair started to grow back it was a very different texture. It came out like the soft hair black babies have and it grew very quickly. I again went to the black hair shop and brought some products to help me care for this new hair.’

Janet
Breast Cancer Care does not approve or endorse any specific suppliers of wigs, headwear and accessories. However, you may find the following list useful. You can find other suppliers in the phone book or via the internet.

Please also note that not all suppliers have a shop, and some of the addresses given below are not intended to receive visitors. If you intend to visit, please contact the supplier first to confirm whether this is possible.

The Breast Cancer Care website also lists a number of organisations who supply headwear designed to meet the needs of people experiencing hair loss. You can find these at www.breastcancercare.org.uk/headwearsuppliers

4myhead.com Limited
346a Farnham Road, Slough, Berkshire SL2 1BT
Telephone: 07505 028 099
Email: info@4myhead.com
Website: www.4myhead.com
Hats, headscarves and headbands in natural fabrics made individually in the UK.

A & A Studios
8/10 Tanfield, Inverleith, Edinburgh EH3 5HF
Telephone: 0131 556 7057
Telephone: 0845 6035602
Website: www.aastudios.co.uk
Offers hair and scalp assessments, custom-made hair systems, luxury real hair extensions, hair integration systems, partial hairpieces and ready-to-wear wigs.
Annabandana
Stedcombe Lodge, Axmouth, Seaton, Devon EX12 4BJ
Telephone: 01297 24026
Website: www.annabandana.co.uk

A range of handmade, fitted headscarves, scarves, sleep caps and bandanas/zandanas.

Bandanashop.com
Penleigh House, Tedburn St Mary, Exeter EX6 6AD
Telephone: 0800 678 5528
Email: sales@bandanashop.com
Website: bandanashop.com

Wide range of headwraps, buffs and bandanas to order online or by phone.

Bohemia Fashions Headware
32 Buchanan Drive, Luton, Beds LU2 0RT
Telephone: 01582 750 083
24 hour secretarial service: 0845 056 8817
Email: info@bohemiaheadwear.co.uk
Website: www.bohemiaheadwear.co.uk

Comfortable headwear for hair loss. Fitted scarves, bandanas, turbans, swim caps, sleep caps, soft hats, fringes and wig accessories. Many items also available in petite size.

Celee – Celebrity Hair Studio
94 Forest Hill Road, London SE22 0RS
Telephone: 020 8693 8507
Email: info@celebrityhairstudio.co.uk
Website: www.celebrityhairstudio.co.uk

Provides a wide range of wigs and hairpieces for all ethnic groups.
Emma & Pickles
The Studio, Pit Cottage, Dinnington, nr Hinton St George, Crewkerne, Somerset TA17 8ST
Telephone: 05602 774 756
Website: www.chemochic.co.uk
Email: enquiries@chemochic.co.uk

Offers headwear for women who lose their hair and want an alternative to a wig. The service is by mail order.

Feelgood Scarves
47 Satchel Lane, Hamble SO31 4HZ
Telephone: 020 8144 4917
Email: info@feelgoodscarves.co.uk
www.feelgoodscarves.co.uk

Stockists of turbans, hats, fringes, scarves and hat liners.

Glenn James Wig Specialists
3 Albany House, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire LN10 6TT
Telephone: 01526 353015
Website: www.glenn-james.co.uk
Email: info@glenn-james.co.uk

Specialists in synthetic, real hair and custom made wigs. All accessories available. Registered NHS supplier.

Hats 4 Heads
Telephone: 0845 576 4287
Email: info@hats4heads.co.uk
Website: www.hats4heads.co.uk

A range of hats designed especially for people who have lost their hair through illness.
**NHC Necessity Headwear Collection**  
NHC at The Caring Hair Studio  
5A Middle Row, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 3AN  
Telephone: 01438 311322  
Email: info@necessityheadwear.com  
Website: www.necessityheadwear.com  

A mail-order range of headwear for women with hair loss.

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**Lulu Chic**  
Website: www.luluchic.co.uk  
Email: info@luluchic.co.uk  

Online shop selling scarves and caps.

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**Taylored Pieces**  
Taylored Pieces, Giggleswick, Mynyddbach, Chepstow NP16 6RW  
Telephone: 0781 207 9143  
Website: www.tayloredpieces.com  

Wig supplier and fitting service.

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**Suburban Turban**  
TurbanTowers, MastersYard, Guildford Road, Westcott, Surrey  
RH4 3NG  
Telephone: 0845 0032 800 or 01306 640 123  
Website: www.suburbanturban.co.uk  

Contemporary headwear for hair loss to buy online.

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**Trendco**  
Sheridan House, 114-116 Western Road, Hove BN3 1DD  
Telephone: 01273 774977/777503  
Email: info@trendco.co.uk  
Website: wigsattrendco.co.uk  

Wig suppliers with mail-order service and salons in Birmingham, Hove, London, Manchester and Nottingham.
Trends Wigs & Hairpieces
337 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2GZ
6 Harrison Street, Leeds LS1 6PA
Telephone: 0114 276 8676 (Sheffield); 0113 245 1504 (Leeds)
Email: sales@trendswigs.co.uk
Website: www.trendswigs.co.uk

Specialists with a wide range of wigs available by mail order or appointment in Sheffield or Leeds.

Wig Bank
7 Beaumont House, 15 St John’s Place, Perth, Perthshire, PH1 5SZ
Telephone: 07831 763062
Email: agnes@wigbank.com
Website: www.wigbank.com

Sell and hire second-hand wigs which have been washed, conditioned and disinfected. Based at a network of locations around the UK, full details are available on their website.

Wigsmart
Website: www.wigsmart.co.uk

Online shop offering a range of wigs and accessories.

Wigs4u
Hair World, Algores Way, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2TQ
Telephone: 01945 587584
Email: enquiries@wigs4u.co.uk
Website: www.wigs4u.co.uk

Specialists with a range of wigs and accessories available by mail order or appointment.
Useful addresses

Ahead of our time (for permanent hair loss following chemotherapy) www.aheadofourtime.org/medical-studies

Alopecia UK
www.alopeciaonline.org.uk

Cancer Hair Care
www.cancerhaircare.com

Look Good Feel Better
West Hill House, 32 West Hill, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8JD
Telephone: 01372 747500
Email: info@lgfb.co.uk
Website: www.lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk
Offers professionally run beauty workshops in hospitals around the country for women living with cancer.

My New Hair
Website: www.mynewhair.org
Email: info@mynewhair.org
Lists a national network of independent salons and professionals who offer a wig styling service.

Philip Kingsley
54 Green Street, London W1K 6RU
Telephone: 0207 629 4004
Email: reception@philipkingsley.co.uk
Website: www.philipkingsley.co.uk
Clinic in London offering treatment for serious hair and scalp conditions.
Strength in Style
Website: toniandguy.com/pages/category/charity/strength-in-style

Strength in Style by Toni & Guy aims to provide people with a local point of contact to help them deal with hair loss and give them some confidence back through its salons. Visit the website to find your nearest participating salon.

Hair donating

Little Princess Trust Hair Donation
114-116 Western Road, Hove BN3 1DD
Email: info@littleprincesses.org.uk
Website: www.littleprincesses.org.uk

Provides real-hair wigs to boys and girls across the UK and Ireland that have lost their own hair through cancer treatment.

Other organisations

Macmillan Cancer Support
89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ
General enquiries: 020 7840 7840
Helpline: 0808 808 0000
Website: www.macmillan.org.uk
Textphone: 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay