



personal experience professional support

Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do. Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call our free helpline on 0808 800 6000.

Breast cancer and hair loss



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Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call our free helpline on **0808 800 6000** (for Typetalk prefix **18001**). Calls may be monitored for training purposes. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Breast Cancer Care.

A large print version of this booklet can be downloaded from our website, www.breastcancercare.org.uk. It is also available on audio CD or in Braille on request. Call **0845 092 0808** for more information.



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Hints and tips

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Introduction

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

Your hair may be very much part of your self-image and losing it may affect your confidence and self-esteem. You may find it easier to deal with if you're prepared for the possibility that you could lose your hair.

This booklet explains how you may lose your hair and the effect it may 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 step-by-step guide to pencilling in eyebrows and applying false eyelashes. We also suggest hints and tips you may want to try to take the focus away from your hair and there is a list of suppliers and organisations that you may find useful.

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 around hair loss for people who are likely to lose their hair, or have already lost it, through treatment for cancer.

The free 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 lose your hair or at any time during treatment. For information about HeadStrong and for services in your area see page 47 or contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre (details at the back of this booklet).



Hair loss: 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 unattractive and unfeminine. You may feel angry that this has happened on top of your cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Hair loss may also make you feel vulnerable and exposed, particularly as it's such a visible side effect and can change your physical appearance. It can also be a constant reminder of your treatment, labelling you as a 'cancer patient'. Such reactions are completely normal and understandable, and you may find it takes some time to adjust to losing your hair.

In some cultures hair has a particular significance. For example, long hair may be seen as a symbol of fertility and desirability or a sign of health and status, while other cultures believe that the hair is a means of getting rid of impurities from the body. If hair has a special cultural significance for you, losing it may affect your cultural identity as well as your body image or self-esteem, making it even more difficult to come to terms with.

Some people, though, may find that the experience of losing their hair isn't as upsetting as they thought it would be, perhaps because they are focusing more on the treatment itself.

If there's any likelihood of you losing your hair your chemotherapy or breast care nurse will talk to you before treatment starts about what may 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.

Everyone will find their own way of dealing with hair loss, but you may find it helps 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 who's experienced hair loss and understands what you may be facing or read what other people say about it on our online discussion forums at www.breastcancercare.org.uk

You may also meet other people having treatment at the hospital or at a breast cancer support group.

'Out of the entire experience losing my hair was the most upsetting. To look in the mirror and be bald highlighted the problem of going through cancer treatment.' **Pauline**

'It was the worst part of all the surgery and treatment. As soon as I put a scarf on I felt I was "coming out" and all the mothers at the school gate would know what was going on and start asking questions.' **Nomkhosi**

'I've always looked after my hair and it was one of my best features, so I'd be lying if I didn't say I was devastated when I lost it.' **Eileen**

'I wasn't particularly thrilled with the idea of losing my hair but I wasn't particularly upset. Bald heads are quite fashionable these days and I had a secret interest that I didn't admit to anyone in seeing what I'd look like without hair.' **Val**



'I was surprised that I didn't feel that bad about losing my hair.'
Sarah B



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. Of course if you choose to wear scarves or not to cover your head your hair loss may be more obvious, while if you choose to wear a wig many people may not notice that you've lost your hair.

People will respond to you losing your hair in different ways, and you may find some reactions difficult to deal with. If people don't know what to say it may help put them at their ease if you bring the subject up first.

You need to be prepared for the possibility that not everyone will be as supportive as you'd like, and that can be hurtful. But lots of people will react well, so try not to withdraw from your friends or your social life.

'I never let it affect me and continued to have a social life. Obviously that takes time and confidence.' Margy

'All my family and friends know why I needed to cover my head. Strangers noticed I wore scarves but clearly weren't sure why. My husband was totally supportive the whole time and never made me feel losing my hair was at all important to him.' Kathryn

'I was always just so glad when I felt physically able to go out that I didn't give a fig what I looked like.' Sarah M

'As I asked family, friends and colleagues to sponsor my head shave, everyone knew about my hair loss. I think it made a possibly taboo subject one we could talk and laugh over.' Kim

'My partner and children knew I'd lost my hair but I always kept my head covered. I did this more for them than me (you get used to looking at yourself bald). I just didn't want them to feel uncomfortable. I never felt the need to tell strangers (not even my workmates) as no-one knew I wore a wig.' Eileen

'Everyone knew I'd lost my hair, though I didn't ever let my sons see me without a scarf or wig. My partner has worked as a nurse on a cancer ward so was very understanding.' Pauline



Talking to your children

If you have children, of whatever age, you may wonder what to tell them about your breast cancer. We know 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. So 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. It may help if you prepare them for the fact that you may lose your hair, tell them what, if anything, you are going to wear on your head and let them know that your hair will grow back. 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** of use.

'My daughter, who's in her early twenties, was upset and cried when I lost my hair but she gradually got used to seeing me around the house with nothing on my head. My 20-year-old son who wears his own hair very short was very positive about my new look. My 15-year-old son refused to look at my razored head at first and wanted me to cover it in the house. However, he soon got used to it and didn't seem too embarrassed if his friends saw my bald head!' Margaret S

'My son didn't cope very well, so when he was around I had to wear a hat, wig or bandana – he didn't like his mum not having any hair. I didn't hide the fact and was very open, and I think the fact I was always joking about it made it easier for other people.' Joan

'My daughter, who was only four at the time, found it quite difficult.' Jayne

'My children were very accepting – as long as I didn't go out without the wig.' Margy



Treatments and hair loss

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy uses anti-cancer drugs to destroy cancer cells. The chemotherapy drugs also damage healthy cells, including the cells in the hair follicles, which is why they can make your hair fall out. Because healthy cells repair themselves quickly, your hair will eventually grow back after treatment is finished.

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 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. See *When your hair grows back* on page 43.

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. For example, if you're having radiotherapy to the breast and lymph glands in your armpit you'll only lose underarm hair, and for men, chest hair. The radiographer or breast care nurse will talk to you about the likelihood of you losing your hair before treatment starts.

After radiotherapy your hair will usually grow back. You may find that the regrowth is patchy, and it can take six to twelve months to grow back completely. 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.

Tamoxifen

The drug tamoxifen may sometimes cause hair thinning. This is a rare side effect which is similar to the kind of hair loss that may occur during the menopause (when your periods stop) because of lower levels of the hormone oestrogen.

Once you stop taking tamoxifen your hair should grow back, though it may be a different colour or texture. In the meantime, see *Looking after your hair during treatment* on page 20 for ideas on caring for your hair while you are taking tamoxifen.

Preventing hair loss

Chemotherapy

With 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. Scalp cooling only works with certain drugs and its effectiveness also depends on the dose used. You can ask your specialist or chemotherapy nurse if scalp cooling is available and whether it would be suitable for you.

Cooling the scalp involves wearing a 'cold cap' while you are having chemotherapy drugs. There are different types of cold cap and ways of cooling the scalp, so the method will depend on what's available in your hospital.

In general you'll wear the cold cap for 15 minutes before you have your

chemotherapy. You keep it on during your treatment and for up to two hours afterwards. You may find the cap uncomfortable, as it is very cold and often quite heavy. However, your chemotherapy nurse will make sure that you're as comfortable as possible, with your head and neck well supported. Some people do experience headaches, but these quickly wear off once the cap is removed.

'The cold cap was a very successful treatment for me and helped a huge amount with the psychological effects of hair loss. It helped to turn a negative experience into a positive one and I feel more people should be made aware of it.' **Jayne**

'I had chemo at home so tried the cold cap method using my domestic freezer. This meant that I had three caps, worn in succession as they 'defrosted'.' **Margaret W**



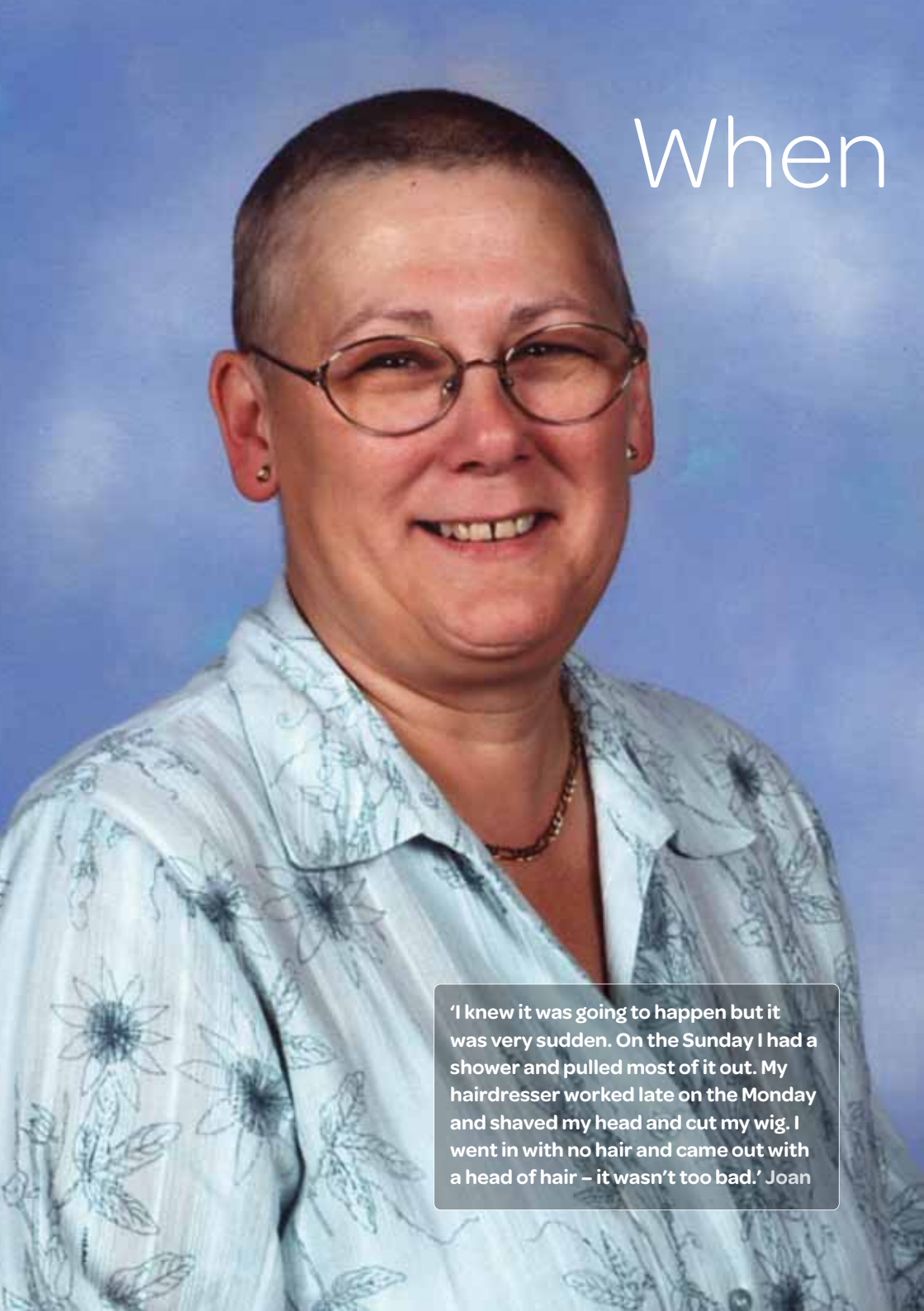
'It certainly helped me retain some hair but it made me extremely cold for the whole chemotherapy session, so I was given hot drinks and small electric heated blankets. The experience was an uncomfortable one but I thought it was worthwhile if there was any chance it would prevent me losing my hair.' **Kathryn**

Radiotherapy

Nothing can be done to prevent hair loss during radiotherapy although it will cause you to lose hair only from the area being treated – usually the underarm or chest.

'I used the cold cap for the first two cycles of chemo but then abandoned it as my hair was falling out rapidly. The cold cap experience was tolerable for me with few side effects and it was certainly worth giving it a try.' **Alison**





When you lose your hair

Hair loss can happen suddenly, although it's usually more gradual and begins within two or three weeks of starting treatment. Your scalp may become tender as the hair thins and falls out.

The first signs that you are losing your hair may be loose hair on the pillow in the morning or extra hair in your hairbrush. This can still be a shock even when you're prepared for it to happen.

Again, there are things that you can do to help.

- You might want to think about having your hair cut short before your treatment starts, particularly if you have long hair. Or rather than wait for your hair to fall out you might decide to shave your head completely before it happens.
- You may want to wear a soft hat or turban in bed to collect loose hairs.
- If you decide not to cover your head, remember to use a high protection factor sun cream at all times, as the scalp is particularly sensitive.
- If your scalp is dry, flaky or itchy you can use unperfumed moisturiser or natural oils such as almond or olive oil. You may prefer to use aromatherapy oils, but it is best to consult a trained aromatherapist, as the oils can be very strong.

'I expected to lose my hair but still had a faint hope that it would not happen to me! However, my hair started to thin and fall out in the three-week period after my first chemotherapy and I developed a bald patch across the top of my head.' Margaret S

'Having half a head of hair was the worst scenario. I was relieved when it had all gone.' Margaret W

'I was expecting to lose my hair, and was in hospital when it started coming out after one dose of chemo. That was when it really struck me that I was officially a cancer patient – in hospital and balding – and I was really low. Over the next week it started coming out in handfuls, falling in my food and clogging up the sink, and after 10 days I'd had enough and called over a friend who's a dab hand with the clippers. It was so liberating to get rid of it and regain control – and it looked surprisingly good.' Sarah M

'I knew it was going to happen but it was very sudden. On the Sunday I had a shower and pulled most of it out. My hairdresser worked late on the Monday and shaved my head and cut my wig. I went in with no hair and came out with a head of hair – it wasn't too bad.' Joan



'I was warned by my oncologist that my hair was likely to fall out when I started chemo, so I had my hair cut shorter leading up to my treatment starting. I also decided that I was going to take some control back over my life and had my head shaved to raise money for my local cancer support charity. I just didn't want to see my hair going down the plughole in clumps so this was my way of retaliating!' [Kim](#)

'I knew it was going to happen and already had my wig and scarves. The hair loss was gradual at first, just a few loose hairs. My normal hairstyle wasn't affected and I didn't think it would be a problem. Then one day in the shower handfuls came out. This was the worst moment and one of the few times that I cried.' [Susan](#)

'I wasn't aware that the actual process of hair loss caused so much discomfort. I clearly remember how sensitive it was to touch, comb or be blown by the wind.' [Alison](#)

'My breast care nurse recommended that I use baby shampoo as my head was very sensitive – and this was good advice. My hairdresser also told me to put olive oil on my scalp, which soothed it and prevented some of the flakiness.' [Kathryn](#)

Body hair

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

It's a good idea to avoid perfumed deodorants if you've lost hair under your arms from chemotherapy, as they can irritate the skin. If you've lost your underarm hair through radiotherapy you shouldn't use anything until your skin has healed completely following treatment.

'I hadn't thought that I may lose my eyebrows and eyelashes and this upset me a little as I just wasn't expecting it.' [Kim](#)

'I felt very distressed, particularly once I lost my body hair. I felt like an android. My body seemed quite alien. It took a long time to get used to seeing myself in the mirror.' [Margi](#)

'An unexpected consequence of losing hair from my nose was that my nose would "run" much more quickly. Speedy use of a tissue was essential!' [Nomkhosi](#)

'I lost most of my eyelashes and found that as a result I was much more prone to getting dust etc. in my eyes. However, I found that the most unpleasant hair loss was the pubic hair as I seemed to get very sweaty and irritated in that area without it.'

[Val](#)

'Everything went eventually. I was lucky enough to keep my eyelashes until almost the end of the chemo, and they grew back fairly quickly. Unfortunately those stray hairs that women get in their forties seem to be among the first to return!' [Sarah B](#)

Looking after your hair during treatment



Hair thinning, poor condition or a dry and itchy scalp can be related to factors such as a poor diet, stress and alcohol. So as well as taking general steps to look after your hair, you may want to try other things, such as eating a healthy diet with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables and avoiding too much alcohol.

Massaging the scalp may also help by improving the blood supply to the hair follicles.

Whatever treatment you're having, it's a good idea to treat your hair as gently as possible. Even if chemotherapy doesn't make your hair fall out, it may make it brittle, dry or straw like. Using natural products may help with dry and brittle hair.

People with all types of hair, including black (African Caribbean) hair, may find the following tips helpful:

- use a mild, unperfumed shampoo and conditioner
- try not to wash your hair more than twice a week
- use tepid 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
- if you have long hair, avoid plaiting it as this may damage it
- avoid using elastic bands to tie back long hair
- avoid hair colours and dyes, perms and other products containing strong chemicals
- avoid products containing alcohol, e.g. hairspray, which can irritate the scalp
- avoid excessive heat from hair straighteners, hairdryers, hot brushes and heated rollers.

'I used shampoo as normal. (I only use natural products, though.) I also made sure I wore a hat on sunny days in the garden when I wasn't wearing a wig.' Susan

'I dabbed witch hazel on the sore spots on my scalp and also started to use a moisturiser.' Val

'I massaged my scalp daily with almond oil to help stimulate the blood supply and keep the scalp from drying and becoming scaly.' Margy



What to wear?

Many women choose to wear wigs, scarves, hats or other headwear until their hair grows back. There are many different reasons for this, from keeping warm 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 be happy not to wear anything.

'At first I wasn't keen on getting a wig but my wonderful breast cancer nurse persuaded me to get one "in case it came in useful". I only wore my wig once but it was for a business meeting with people I didn't know very well. It felt more appropriate to be wearing a wig than a scarf in that more formal setting. I felt more confident.' Nomkhosi

'It took me a while to find a way of covering my head that worked for me, and I could have saved a fortune by not buying a wig, headscarves and bandanas that have had so little use. I have, however, met women who've been delighted with their wigs or who have got scarf-tying off to a fine art, so I think that it just shows that we are all individuals.' Margaret S

'I felt an adventurous bravado in my decision to go bald. After the years I'd spent trying to keep my fine hair looking halfway reasonable it was really liberating to discover that I didn't have to be styled to be accepted.' Val

'I did receive help through the hospital around scarves and hats but I didn't like wearing these as I felt they drew attention to my baldness.' Eileen

'I tried scarves for about a week, but they kept slipping off. I wore a woolly beanie purely to protect against the cold.' Sarah B



Wigs

Today's 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 moment you're entitled to a free wig on the NHS if:

- you are an inpatient when the wig is supplied
- you or your partner are receiving Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's 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 will provide you with a free wig on the NHS, whether or not you meet any of the conditions above. (In Scotland you're entitled to a wig as soon as you start any cancer treatment, whether you're an inpatient or an outpatient.)

To find out if you're entitled to a free wig see the Department of Health (DH) leaflet HC11 *Help with health costs*. The DH also publishes a leaflet providing information on how much wigs cost (HC12 *Charges and optical voucher*

values). You can view these on the DH work and pensions website at www.dh.gov.uk or get copies from staff at your hospital. You're 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 the HC1 form, which you can get from your specialist nurse at your hospital, a Jobcentre Plus office, some chemists and GP surgeries.

Only wigs made of synthetic hair are available on the NHS, so if you prefer to buy a wig made of real hair you'll need to pay for it yourself. Real hair wigs are usually more expensive. As a rough guide, synthetic wigs cost from around £50–£100, while real hair wigs may cost £200 and upwards.

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're forced 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.

You don't have to pay VAT (Value Added Tax) on a wig when hair loss is caused by cancer treatments. To claim back the VAT you will need to complete a VAT 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 *Useful addresses*) but your doctor, nurse or social worker will need to apply on your behalf.

'I chose my wig at the local chemo unit before my treatment started. The hairdresser helped me choose a style and it's quite different from my own hair in both style and colour. I wasn't intending to wear it but I prefer it to scarves now. I find it quite comfortable and wear it all day at work. I'm a teacher and wondered if the children would notice but apart from an initial comment about my new style they haven't said anything.'
Susan



'When I had my recurrence I went back to my specialist hairdresser for something more exciting and different. He sensibly steered me away from a bright pink wig to one with a spiky young-looking style that really suited me. All I got were comments on how good it looked and to keep the style when my hair grew back.' Margi

'My wig was a godsend and worth every single penny. No one knew I was wearing one until I told them.'
Margaret W

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.
- Remember that the wig can be cut and styled to make it look more natural and feel more personal. (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.
- Synthetic wigs are light and easy to care for. They are often pre-styled so can be washed and left to drip dry. They are also cheaper than real hair wigs.
- Real hair wigs need to be handled more carefully and may need professional cleaning and restyling. They are also more expensive than synthetic wigs.

'The shop assistant put on a cap to hide my own hair before I tried on any wigs. This was a very emotional moment as we realised what I was going to look like without my hair.'

Jayne

'I had a wig supplied free of charge via the NHS and treated myself to a second longer one for special occasions. I had them both trimmed by my hairdresser so they suited my face shape and I was very pleased with the look. So many people had no idea it was a wig! It was comfortable to wear but rather warm on occasions.' Kim



Wearing a wig

- If you're worried about your wig 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. When you take it off you can remove any leftover adhesive with surgical spirit. 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're 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 the 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.

'Both times I lost my hair I bought some fantastic wigs that looked very like my own hair and weren't very expensive. When you first wear them you are a bit nervous they may slip off but I found even in windy conditions there was no chance of them coming off.' Eileen

'I sometimes found my wig too hot indoors and couldn't wait to get home and take it off. However, in winter, the wind whistling through the wig meant my head felt very cold. I often wore a hat as well, but it was often quite funny trying to hold onto the wig while taking off the hat.' Margi

'Although it was rather itchy around my ears I was very pleased with my wig and several people thought it was my own hair.' Pauline

Other headwear

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

Our HeadStrong service and some other hospitals can show you different ways of tying scarves and a selection of suitable hats and other accessories. See pages 30-33, ring our free helpline on 0808 800 6000 or ask your breast care nurse about services in your area.

'Once I discovered Buffwear I never looked back. I built up a collection of nine Buffs in colours to match every outfit that I wear. For a special evening out I purchased a soft cotton jersey black cap and a separate cream band to wrap round it. I've found that the cap looks even better with a Buff wrapped round it, giving more volume to a small round bald head! Buffs come in cool and trendy patterns and colours, so I get lots of compliments and positive comments.' Margaret S

'I wore a lot of hats, scarves and bandanas. I preferred these to my wig as it was very hot and itchy. I preferred caps most of the time because they were comfy and quick to put on.' Joan

'I always wore a beanie to bed as I found my head got really cold at night – my "bedtime beanie" amused my family no end.' Margi

'I didn't wear anything at all to cover up my baldness. However, as it was summertime I carried a simple sunhat for when I was in the sun for any length of time so as not to burn my scalp.' Val



Scarves

Scarves 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.

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.

See the following pages for some suggestions for different ways of tying scarves.

'I wore lots of different types of headgear and I loved wearing scarves. I bought all different colours, with contrast scarves, and learned how to tie them at the hospital. I took time every day to ensure my scarf was well co-ordinated with my outfit. It was like applying make-up or doing my hair. It just made me feel I was ready to go. Wearing pretty earrings finished the look and I felt just fine.'

Kathryn

'Some friends kindly gave me a lovely bright silk scarf that I used to wear when I was at home.' Kim



Great looks with scarves

Basic headwrap

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.

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



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



3 Tie the ends into a double knot behind your head over the triangle point (if you are doing more than the basic headwrap you may only need a single knot). The flap should be underneath the knot. Pull any excess scarf from under the knot.



4 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:

- 'scrumple' 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.



'I usually wore hats or tied scarves round my head when I was at home, or when it was too hot to wear my wig.'

Margi

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. The bow also looks good under a hat.



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.



Twist the long ends separately, bring them forward and tie them at the front of your head.

**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.

Continue twisting and tucking the ends in around your head. At the back, twist the short end and tuck it in.



Hats

When looking for a hat, you may want to choose a style that can be pulled well down to cover your hairline. As well as specialist hat shops and department stores, wig and headwear suppliers also stock suitable hats (see *Headwear and wig suppliers* on page 48).



'I crocheted some skull caps in different colours and wore them for warmth. I also had a big furry Davy Crockett hat, which hid a multitude of sins.' Sarah M



'I wore a lot of caps to hide the bald patches.' Jayne

'I found it useful to keep a towelling hat in my dressing gown pocket in case I needed to answer the door in a hurry.' Nomkhosi

Turbans

Cotton or jersey turbans are light, comfortable and easy to wash. They don't cost much and 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 no matter what headwear you choose, you still don't look right. Worn under a scarf or hat, you may find that a fringe on a Velcro band makes all the difference. 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.





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, on some people they thin, and others lose them altogether.

Eyelashes

If you lose your eyelashes you'll probably find that your eyes get sore easily. If your eyes are inflamed ask your chemotherapy nurse for some drops to help reduce the soreness. Rinsing your eyes with saline (salt water) solution in an eye bath or egg cup may help, but check with your chemotherapy nurse first.

Eyelashes can take up to a year to grow back fully, although they will usually grow back in about six months. They can sometimes grow back patchily.

You may want to use make-up or false eyelashes to replace your eyelashes. You can use eyeliner to draw along the top of your eyelid to give the illusion of lashes. Choose either an eyeliner 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. False eyelashes can be bought from chemists and 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 and more exotic. Make-up counters in department stores are a good source of help, or try your local beauty salon.

'I did lose all my eyelashes but not my eyebrows. I wasn't aware of this happening as it seemed to come about very slowly. The hardest to lose was my eyelashes as it was very noticeable.' Eileen

'I used false eyelashes for parties and only wore mascara when necessary. I used only non-waterproof mascara so that I could remove it without dragging the lashes. For every day I wore eyeliner but I didn't bother pencilling in my eyebrows.' Sarah B

'Despite the loss of my eyebrows and eyelashes I never tried to recreate them. Since the loss was not sudden I gradually got used to my changed appearance. I continued to wear a soft eyeliner to define my eyes. I also wore mascara until I lost my last few eyelashes.' Alison

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 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.

'I used a brow pencil for eyebrows and a blue liner around my eyelids, which did help.' Margy

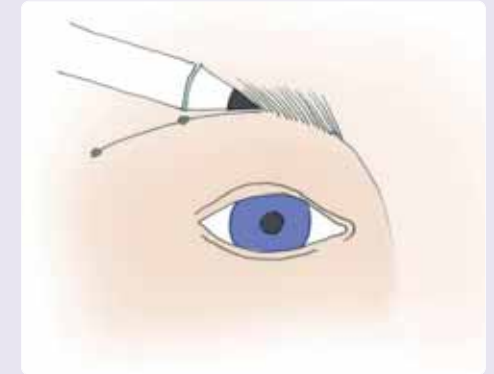
'I used eyebrow powder and that made a huge difference to how I felt – it's marvellous stuff.' Margaret W



Drawing or filling in your eyebrows

To redraw or fill in your eyebrows, find your natural eyebrow arch and use short feathery strokes for a natural look.

- Hold a pencil upright along the side of your nose. This is the natural start of the eyebrow. Draw a dot as a guide.
- Hold a pencil at an angle to the outer edge of the eye – this is where the eyebrow finishes. Mark with a dot.
- Look straight ahead – hold the pencil upright in line with the outer edge of the iris (The coloured part of the eye). This point is the highest part of the brow. Again mark with a dot.
- Once you're happy with the basic shape, 'join up' the points for the shape of the brow line with feathery strokes of colour, making the brow fuller on the inside corner and thinning out as it moves out.





Changing the emphasis

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

- Try wearing a brightly coloured or patterned top.
- Jewellery such as earrings, necklaces, rings and brooches can attract attention, as can an unusual watch.
- You could experiment with make-up, using new colours on your lips and eyes.
- An eye-catching bag, distinctive belt or pair of shoes can also help draw the eye.

'I used to go weeks without wearing any eye make-up, but I found once I lost my hair and was very pale because of anaemia, my face looked featureless if I didn't use eye make-up and bright red lippy!' Sarah M

'I wore lots of make-up and big earrings to compensate. It certainly turned heads.' Sarah B

Some hospitals run a *Look Good Feel Better* programme where you'll get expert advice on make-up and skincare. Ask your breast care or chemotherapy nurse if there is a programme in any of your local hospitals.

'I lost my eyelashes and eyebrows and wore make-up to recreate them. I attended a make-up class at the hospital which was a real treat. Not only did I learn to draw reasonable eyebrows but I met a bunch of women who were going through the same thing and worse. We used to meet up at outpatient appointments and it was great to see a friendly face and have a good natter while we were waiting to be seen.' Nomkhosi



When your hair grows back

Your hair will start to grow back once your treatment is over, and sometimes it may even start to grow back before you finish your treatment. After three to six months you should have a full covering of hair on your head. Other hair, such as your eyebrows and eyelashes, may grow back more quickly or more slowly.

When it grows back the quality of your hair may be different from before. It may be softer and more baby-like in texture, or curlier, or may be a different colour. Your hair will often return to how it was before, though in some cases the change may be permanent.

While your hair is growing back you need to continue to treat it with care.

- It's best to avoid perming, colouring or using chemical products on your hair for at least six months after the end of treatment, as your hair may still be weak.
- If you do want to colour your hair, ask your hairdresser for advice on natural products such as henna or vegetable-based colour.
- Avoid hair extensions that are woven in for several months after your hair has begun to grow back as the new hair will be very delicate and liable to break easily.

'At first I looked closely at strangers to gauge their reaction but no-one gave me a second glance. I'm now starting to venture out with my new short hair ... I'm still a bit wary and I pick and choose where and when I go wigless.'
Susan

'After the chemotherapy finished my hair gradually started to grow back. It was emotional to have hair again. It grew back very thick and curly. When I first went out I was self-conscious but after the first time out I was fine.'

Pauline

'I used to have long, straight, very fine sandy-coloured hair. I now have dark brown hair, which is coarser, curly and naturally at the moment very short. The first time I revealed my new hair it was very exciting and I was waiting for everyone to comment on it.' Kathryn

'When I took my scarf off for the first time I looked like I had a very short shaven head, but it was possible to go out. It's amazing what a difference a half centimetre of hair can make.'

Margaret W



'In December I made my first visit to a customer since losing my hair and as it was still very short I wore a woolly hat to keep my head warm. I signed in at the reception desk and pulled my hat off, whereupon the security guard burst out, "Oh, I love your hair, it really suits you!" I could have kissed him.'
Val

'The whole experience was not as terrible as I had first imagined. The hardest time for me was the actual process of hair loss.' Alison

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 wear a wig or other headwear until your hair is longer.

It may help to remember that while losing your hair and living without it can be a distressing time it doesn't last for ever. It can be easier to cope with than people expect and sometimes there is even a positive side to the experience.

'It was very liberating not to have to think about hair! I have kept my hair very short since as it's so easy and looks quite avant garde.' Sarah M

'It's only a temporary loss, which of course can be devastating. However, it is important to keep focused throughout this experience, knowing there's light at the end of the tunnel and your hair will come back.' Margy

'It was a total surprise to me that I could cope with losing my hair, which was due in no short measure to everyone else's loving support and acceptance of the situation.' Kathryn

Beyond this booklet

Further support from Breast Cancer Care

Free telephone helpline 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001)

Our helpline provides information and support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Everyone on our helpline either has personal experience of breast cancer or is a breast care nurse. The team comes from a variety of backgrounds, so callers get to talk to someone who understands the issues they're facing.

The team is able to talk about clinical, medical and emotional issues surrounding breast cancer and breast health. Everyone on the helpline has an excellent knowledge of breast cancer issues and receives daily information on new developments. They can talk through the complexities of different treatments to help you understand your options and explain the best way for you to get treatment.

Volunteer support

Many people who have breast cancer find it helpful to talk to someone who has been in a similar situation. Breast Cancer Care's Peer support service puts you in touch with someone who has personal experience of breast cancer and has been trained to listen and offer emotional support. You can talk to someone at any stage – whenever you feel it would help. Call our helpline or visit our website for more information about this free service. You can also contact our centres to access these services (contact details on the inside back cover of this booklet).

Ask the nurse

This is another service on the Breast Cancer Care website. You can email a question on any breast cancer or breast health issue and our team of specialist nurses will reply promptly. The service is strictly confidential.

Online discussion forums and Live chat

The Breast Cancer Care website hosts discussion forums covering all aspects of the disease and its treatment. This service is available 24 hours a day and allows you to talk to people in a similar situation to you and to share your thoughts and feelings.

All forum users post their messages and responses at any time. However, the regular Live chat sessions take place among users who are all logged on at the same time. They are hosted by Breast Cancer Care staff or a clinical specialist and give you the opportunity to discuss anything related to your diagnosis. Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk for more details.

Publications

Breast Cancer Care produces a wide range of publications providing information for anyone affected by breast cancer. All of our publications are regularly reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer. You can order our publications by using our order form, which can be requested from our helpline. All our publications can also be downloaded from our website.

Courses and activities

We run courses and activities for people with breast cancer, which aim to provide information and support and give people the chance to meet others in a similar situation. For more information about these events, contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre or call our helpline.

HeadStrong and other hair loss programmes

Breast Cancer Care's HeadStrong service and hair loss programmes run by other organisations are available around the country. For details of services in your area, ask your breast care nurse or ring our free helpline on 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001).

HeadStrong

HeadStrong is a free advisory service run by professionally trained volunteers, offering information and support on hair loss due to cancer treatment, on an individual appointment basis.

Alnwick and Berwick North

Northumberland Hospice 01665 606515

Blantyre The Haven Centre

01698 727884

Clatterbridge The Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology 0151 334 1155

Chorley Dignity Wigs

01257 795819

Doncaster The Aurora Centre

01302 553198

Halifax and Huddersfield Macmillan Unit, Calderdale Royal Hospital 01422 222703

Hastings Conquest Hospital

01424 755255 ext 8291

Liverpool The Linda McCartney Centre 0151 706 3720

Middlesbrough Holistic Cancer Care Centre 01642 854839

Motherwell The Dalziel Centre 01698 245026

Newcastle upon Tyne Marie Curie Centre 0191 219 1000

Purley SEHC

020 8668 0974

Southend Southend University Hospital 01702 435555 ext 6057

Stockport Beechwood Cancer Care Centre 0161 476 0384

West Bromwich Court Yard Centre, Sandwell Hospital 0121 607 7971

We are opening more HeadStrong services all the time, so please call your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre to find out about services in your area.

Headwear and wig suppliers

Here is a selection of suppliers of wigs, headwear and accessories. You can find other suppliers in the phone book or via the internet.

4myhead.com

PO Box 3792, Slough SLY 0HQ

Telephone: 07505 028099

Email: info@4myhead.com

Website: www.4myhead.com

Hats, headscarves and headbands in natural fabrics made individually in the UK.

Bandanashop.com

Penleigh House, Tedburn St Mary, Exeter EX6 6AD

Telephone: 0800 231 6332

Email: sales@bandanashop.com

Website: http://bandanashop.com

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

Black Care UK

PO Box 2169, Woodford Green IG8 0NE

Telephone: 020 8279 0335/0337

Email: info@blackcareuk.com

Website: www.blackcareuk.com

Suppliers of African Caribbean hair care products including wigs.

C&E Headwear

PO Box 518, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 7DY

Telephone: 01825 791337

Email: pat@pfrank.wanadoo.co.uk

Mail order range of headwear especially designed for those experiencing hair loss.

Celee – Celebrity Hair Studio

274C Lee High Road, London SE13 5PJ

94 Forest Hill Road, London SE22 0RS

Telephone: 020 8297 7904/020 8693 8507

Email: info@celebrityhairstudio.co.uk

Website: www.celebrityhairstudio.co.uk

Provides a wide range of wigs and hairpieces for all ethnic groups.

Hats 4 Heads

PO Box 407, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9WX

Telephone: 0161 941 6748

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.

The India Shop

5 Hilliers Yard, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 1BE

Telephone: 01672 851155

Email: enquiries@theindiashop.co.uk

Website: www.theindiashop.co.uk

Wide range of specially designed 100% fair-trade cotton scarves and accessories.

NHC Necessity Headwear Collection

3 Christian Close, Hoddesdon, Herts EN11 9FF

Telephone: 01992 474104

Email: info@necessityheadwear.com

Website: www.necessityheadwear.com

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

Periwig Consultants

2 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Telephone: 029 2022 4767

Email: info@periwigconsultants.com

Website: www.periwigconsultants.com

Wig specialists with a wide range available by face-to-face appointment in Cardiff or mail order.

Suburban Turban

Laycocks, School Lane, Westcott, Surrey RH4 3QF

Telephone: 01306 885257

Email: nicky@suburbanturban.co.uk

Website: www.suburbanturban.co.uk

Contemporary, specially designed headwear for hair loss to buy online.

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@webwigs.co.uk

Website: www.webwigs.co.uk

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

Wigs4u

PO Box 9, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 1HN

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.

Wills Wigs

The Studio, Holt House,
49 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire B61 0DR

Telephone: 01527 871709

Email: info@willswigs.co.uk

Website: www.willswigs.co.uk

Wig specialists with an extensive range
of hats, scarves and turbans available by
appointment or mail order.

Useful addresses

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.

* Cancerbackup

3 Bath Place, Rivington Street,
London EC2A 3JR

Office: 020 7696 9003 Freephone

helpline: 0808 800 1234 (Mon–Fri,
9am–7pm)

Email: info@cancerbackup.org

Website: www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Cancerbackup is a national information
and support charity for people affected
by cancer. Services include a helpline,
staffed by specialist cancer information
nurses, a website, cancer information
booklets and local information centres.
All Cancerbackup services are free to
people affected by cancer.

* Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7UQ

Telephone: 020 7840 7840 Macmillan
CancerLine: 0808 808 2020 Textphone:
0808 808 0121 Email:
cancerline@macmillan.org.uk Website:
www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support is helping
people who are living with cancer
through the provision of immediate
practical and emotional support.
Specialist services include Macmillan
nurses and doctors, cancer centres, a
range of cancer information and direct
financial help. The Macmillan CancerLine
provides information and emotional
support. Textphone available.

* These two organisations are in the process of
merging at the time of going to press.

Would you like more information?

To find out more about Breast Cancer Care and the free services we offer,
please fill in your details below and return this slip to:

**Breast Cancer Care, FREEPOST RRRKZ-ARZY-YCKG,
5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS**

Your details

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

please tick if you are happy to receive emails from us

I am a (please tick)

person who has/who has had breast cancer

friend/relative of someone with breast cancer

healthcare professional

other (please state)

Please complete reverse of page

Please let us know where you got this Breast Cancer Care publication.

Breast Cancer Care will not pass your details to any other organisation or third party.

From time to time we may wish to send you further information on our services and activities.

Please tick here if you don't want to hear from us.

free helpline 0808 800 6000

www.breastcancercare.org.uk



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For all breast cancer or breast health concerns call our free, national helpline on **0808 800 6000** (for Tynetalk prefix **18001**) or visit **www.breastcancercare.org.uk**

Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Breast Cancer Care.

Donations from the public make it possible for us to provide publications like this one free to people affected by breast cancer. If you would like to make a donation, please send your cheque to: Breast Cancer Care, RRRKZ-ARZY-YCKG, 5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS. Or donate via our website at www.breastcancercare.org.uk

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5-13 Great Suffolk Street
London SE1 0NS
Telephone 0845 092 0800
Fax 0845 092 0820
Email info@breastcancercare.org.uk

Centres

Scotland and Northern Ireland

Telephone 0845 077 1892
Email sco@breastcancercare.org.uk

Wales, South West and Central England

Telephone 0845 077 1894
Email cym@breastcancercare.org.uk

East Midlands and the North of England

Telephone 0845 077 1893
Email nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk

London and the South East of England

Telephone 0845 077 1895
Email src@breastcancercare.org.uk