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Hair Loss During Chemotherapy

    When someone has cancer a lot of things happen. Treatments for cancer includes surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy.  Of course with every treatment, there are negative side effects. The one side effect that is more of a mental and social challenge for these cancer patients is hair loss. Some people will only lose a couple of chunks but others will go bald. Hair loss has a very big impact on how people feel about themselves. During these times they need others to be there for them. When they lose their hair, they feel that their loved ones are repulsed by them. The type of cancer treatment a patient has affects the amount and areas of hair loss.

    Chemotherapy and radiation therapy kills cells. This includes both healthy and unhealthy cells. These treatments are designed to attack rapidly splitting cells. Hair happens to be one of the fastest splitting cells in the body. They split every 23 to 74 hours. This means, they grow rapidly like cancer cells and are also targeted by cancer treatments. Even though hair loss occurs during treatment, the hair follicles recover and hair will eventually grow back.

No one is ever truly prepared for what happens during treatment. People that lose hair end up getting really depressed about it. Many of them think that they will be okay with hair loss but in the end, they aren't. When they see their hair in the drain of the shower or even on their pillow in the morning, it hurts them. This is because hair is a big component in our society today. Girls are suppose to have this perfect thick long hair; guys (especially young ones) aren't supposed to be bald. When they can't live up to society’s standards they get depressed.

Just because someone has cancer, it doesn't mean that they will go bald. It depends on the type of cancer and treatment used. If the chemotherapy contains Adriamycin, then then it is expected that all hair on the head will be lost and sometimes even the eyelashes and eyebrows.  If Methotrexate is in the chemotherapy medication, then hair will typically thin and complete hair loss is rare. Radiation will always cause baldness but only where the treatment is taking place. Hormonal therapy, which typically occurs after all other cancer treatments, does not cause hair loss but does cause it to thin out.

Resources

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