How to Prepare for Losing Your Hair During Ovarian Cancer Treatment

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Coping With Ovarian Cancer and Hair Loss

You grow it out, cut it short, dye it, and style it. You wash it and dry it. Love it or hate it, you could always count on your hair being there. But when the doctor informed you of your ovarian cancer diagnosis, thoughts of your hair quickly flooded your mind.

Will it fall out? Will it ever grow back? What will people say? What will I do?

These questions are expected for someone with a fresh cancer diagnosis. Even though the types of cancer are as different as the people they impact, hair loss is a common aspect of the experience.

Chemotherapy, the treatment that attacks cancer cells in your body, works by targeting all cells that grow rapidly, including the cells around your hair follicles. As the cells die or are damaged, your hair will fall out.

Hair loss will not just be restricted to your scalp — it will occur all over your body.

Changes in your appearance are associated with fluctuating self-perceptions and self-esteem. As if the physical hardships linked to ovarian cancer were not enough, you also have to manage the psychological aspects of the disease.

You may not be able to prescribe your cancer treatments, but luckily, coping with the mental impact of hair loss is something you are qualified to address.

Care for the Inside

Although there's going to be many external transitions that come with cancer treatment, it will benefit you to begin with the inside. You will be in a better position to manage the many changes that will occur if your mental health is stable and strong.

Grieve the Loss

A cancer diagnosis is not a death sentence, but you will still need to grieve the loss. It is a loss of your health, a loss of your wellbeing, and a loss of your hair.

You may find yourself feeling different as your vulnerability and sensitivity grow. Grieving and mourning are natural whenever there is a major shift in your life.

In the beginning, you can aid the process by permitting yourself to experience the unwanted and uncomfortable feelings. When you try to restrict your feelings or try to "be strong," you block the natural process.

With time and the patience necessary, you can move away from the shock and sadness and towards feelings of acceptance.

Manage Self-Talk

When you find acceptance and acknowledgment of your situation you can begin working to monitor and change your self-talk, the ongoing dialogue you have with yourself throughout the day.

There is a strong possibility your self-talk can become more negative and pessimistic when a negative life event occurs. This change can lead to increased depression and anxiety if left unchecked.

Your self-talk is completely within your control, though. By changing your self-talk, you can better cope with the losses associated with cancer — including your hair.

Rather than focusing on aspects of fear, embarrassment, or frustration about your hair, work to remind yourself that this is an expected part of treatment. The people who truly love and care about you will support you no matter what you look like.

Your hair does not define you. With these ideas repeated in your mind, you can limit the negative impact of your hair loss.

Limiting the negative self-talk will be crucial, but it is only half of the challenge. The other half is adding positive self-talk elements that focus on the good elements of yourself and your life that exist.

Your hair will grow back, but if you focus on it too much, other aspects of your life could be damaged. Spend time each day looking at yourself to find desirable characteristics that you can emphasize during your treatment.

Your eyes, your smile, and your quick wit cannot be defeated by cancer. This self-talk approach will build your self-esteem and make coping with hair loss an easier trial.

Plan Your Next Move

You have found acceptance. You have control of your self-talk. Now it is time to make a choice about what will become of the top of your head.

The good news is you have options!

You can take steps to maintain your hair through the use of ice packs and gentle care in the shower. You can try to cover the loss with a new style or cut. You can opt for shaving your head or experiment with any number of scarves, wigs, and hats.

When you make your decision, celebrate it. Making your hair loss a shameful secret will breed sadness and make coping more of a struggle.

Isolation never helps. Instead, plan a gather that is a celebration of all things you. If you choose to shave your head, see how many friends and family members you can convince to go along with you.

Too many people losing their hair use the situation as a chance to push people away. Use it to bring you closer to the important people in your life.

Communicate Your State

By now you have already noticed people have a lot of opinions — they will offer suggestions of what you should do and how you should do it whether or not you are interested in their feedback.

Some might dread these interactions, but you will benefit from taking a preventive approach and communicating your thoughts to others. Let people know what you are feeling and what you hope to achieve during your hair loss.

Most importantly, let them know what you need. Do you need a distraction from your crazy day? Do you need a shoulder to cry on? Do you need a fashion consultant to provide assistance on style options?

People in your life will be willing to help, but they will not always know how. You must tell them.

Losing your hair is just one of the struggles caused by ovarian cancer, but it is significant. It can lead to untold stress if you allow feelings of shame and hurt to grow.

Challenge these risks by grieving and acting in ways to boost your acceptance and self-esteem. This will lower stress and improve your wellbeing through the loss and the regrowth.