

CANCER TREATMENT & HAIR LOSS

MAIMOATANGA
MATE PUKUPUKU ME
TE NGAHORNO NOA
O NGĀ MAKAWE



**Cancer and its treatment
can have a huge impact on
how you look and how you
feel about your appearance.**

This booklet will have information on why
these things are happening to you and
advise you on how to deal with them.



Help! ...Am I going to lose my hair?

One of the most common worries about having treatment is.....

“Will I lose my hair?” Many young people find this to be one of the hardest part of their treatment.

It's normal to feel like your hair forms a big part of your identity which means losing it or dealing with changes can be especially tough.

Not everyone loses their hair, but many young people undergoing treatment do. You don't wake up one morning to find it all gone - the first thing you will notice is that your hair starts to come out when you brush, comb or wash it. This may be patchy at first. You may also find hair on your pillow and your scalp may feel tender or sore. Sometimes the hair comes out very quickly over a few days, however for others it may take several weeks or months. For some young people their hair just becomes thinner. The amount of hair loss will depend on the type of

treatment received and your sensitivity to it. You may also lose your body hair; including eyebrows, eyelashes, facial, chest, underarm, leg and pubic hair. Make sure you ask your nurse/doctor about your situation.

Hair loss occurs because hair follicle cells multiply very quickly, like cancer cells and chemotherapy drugs have difficulty in telling the difference between the two. This results in chemotherapy drugs damaging your healthy hair follicle cells.

Should I expect to lose my hair?
When do you think it might happen?

I don't want it to happen to me...

What should I do?

How do I prepare for this?

You could think of having your hair cut short before treatment starts.

- This may help minimise hair loss as it reduces the weight of the hair pulling on the scalp.
- If you are used to having long hair you might find it easier to have it cut in stages to give you time to adjust to a new length.
- Cutting it short also avoids knotting.

Some young people prefer to shave their heads completely even before they start losing their hair. This gives you a sense of control over what is going to happen.

If you notice your hair starting to fall out, keep it clean and brushed. Use gentle hair products and a soft brush.

Take care in the sun - use sunblock to protect your scalp and always wear a hat/bandana outside.

Have some fun - cut it into a different style before you start treatment.

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Wigs, hats and all that stuff

Once you have lost your hair there are many ways of dealing with this.

You may not mind your bald head, but if you do want to cover it up there are many types of wigs, hats, beanies and scarves that you can use.



Wigs

There are many different styles and colours to choose from. The wigs look really natural and comfortable to wear. Most wigs you will see are synthetic (momofibre), and there are also human hair wigs available.

Wigs FAQs

Q: Will my wig come off when running across the road?

A: No... wigs are adjusted to your head size. The hairdressers at the wig shop will ensure they are correctly fitted so they will not come off.

Q: Do they come in my colour or length?

A: There are many styles and colours from which to choose. Often it is more reassuring to choose your wig before you lose your hair so you can match your style and colour to your natural hair. If you do not have a fringe, you will now as the edge of the wig needs to be covered.

Q: Can I straighten and blow-dry my wig?

A: Generally human hair wigs can be heat styled. Non-human hair wigs can't. Your wig supplier will give you instructions on styling and caring for your wig.

Q: Do I wash it?

A: Yes - you hand wash it. Instructions on how to care for your wig will be provided. For most wigs, hand wash in a basin with shampoo and conditioner every two to three weeks and leave it to drip dry on a jar. Once it has dried it is ready to wear - it will not lose the style. Comb your wig (do not brush).

Q: Can I bring friend or relative to help me make a decision?

A: We encourage you do this. If you want to match your wig to your previous hairstyle, try and choose a wig with the same volume of hair as you had before. Too much hair may make it look less natural. Choose your own colour or one shade lighter. If your wig hair is darker than your natural colour it can draw attention to the change. Generally a change to a lighter colour can look less noticeable. Remember the wig can be cut and styled to suit your needs by your hair dresser/wig consultant. The longer the wig is the harder it is to maintain. It is best to keep wigs shoulder length and above. For a fee you can have regular maintenance on your wig, with the option of the cost coming out of your wig allowance.

Q: Can I tie my wig up or use clips?

A: Yes but don't pull too hard or you may see the edges of the wig.

Other types of headwear

Wigs are not the only way of covering up.

Another option is to wear hats, buffs, beanies and scarves. There are so many fun options. You can change your look to suit your mood and style. They protect your head but also look great.

Remember you don't have to hide the fact that you have lost your hair. If you prefer to be just as you are, with no hair, wigs, or hats that is also totally fine.



How can I afford this?

Wigs and Hairpieces Service Payment - Ministry of Health

This is a payment that any young person undergoing cancer therapy which causes hair loss can receive.

The payment is available to cover the cost of a wig and/or headwear (hats, beanies etc) <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/claims-provider-payments-and-entitlements/wigs-and-hairpieces-subsidy>.

Tip

You don't have to use the payment all on one wig - you can buy several more affordable wigs, a mixture of wigs and headwear, or just headwear!

Under 18 years

Your entitlement is \$1226.67 over a three year period or until you turn 18. You can claim all or part of your \$1226.67 entitlement at any time during the 3 year period.

18 years and over

Your entitlement is \$408.89 over a one year period. You can claim all or part of your \$408.89 entitlement at any time over the one year period. If your hair loss is permanent your entitlement is \$2,300.67 over a nine year period.



How do you claim?

To purchase a wig

Most of the wig shops will claim on your behalf, so there is no need to exchange money. Please read the below and refer to the flow chart to help you through this process.

All you will need to provide the wig store with is the medical certificate provided in this pack. The rest they will take care of.

To purchase headwear

If you wish to purchase hats, scarfs and beanies from a retail shop you will need to pay for the product first and then make a claim for reimbursement. Please read the below and refer to the flow chart to help you through this process.

To do this you will need to apply for a PAYEE number. You must fill out the application for Individual Wigs and Hair Pieces Payee Number Form included in this pack and send it to WHBP Team, Sector Operations, PO Box 1942, Dunedin 9054. Attached to this form should be the second medical certificate included in the pack with a pre-printed or verified bank deposit slip.

Every time you wish to make a claim you must complete an Individual Wigs and Hair Pieces Claim Form attached with the receipts of your purchase. They are to be sent to Health PAC P.O. Box 1026, Wellington. For your first claim you can send the claim form with the application form and medical certificate. It is your responsibility to monitor how much you spend.

Your AYA Keyworker will be able to direct you to some local providers for wig and headwear.

Local wig/headwear providers

I wish to purchase a wig/headware/hairpiece

What's a MoH store?
This is a store that can claim for your wig or hairpiece on your behalf - ask for a list of approved stores from your AYA Keyworker or doctor

I have a medical certificate stating that I qualify for the subsidy

NO → Ask your keyworker for this

YES

Is the wig/hairpiece from a Ministry of Health (MoH) approved store?

YES

NO

Bring or send your medical certificate to the store and they can arrange payment on your behalf

The wig/hairpiece I want is not from a Ministry of Health approved store (e.g. a cap from a surf shop)

NO

I have money left over and want to purchase another wig/hairpiece

YES

The wig/hairpiece I wish to buy is from a MoH approved store

NO

YES

Bring your medical certificate to the store and they can arrange payment on your behalf

This is my first claim (I have never applied for a PAYEE number)

YES

NO

This is my first claim:

1. You need to apply for a PAYE number so that the MoH can pay you back - you can apply for this number before or after purchasing a wig/hairpiece (please ask your AYA Keyworker for the PAYEE application form if you have not received it with this booklet);
2. Once you have paid for your wig/hairpiece, keep the receipt and complete the Wigs and Hairpieces Claim Form (please ask your AYA Keyworker for this claim form if not received with this booklet);
3. Send the following:
 - Wigs and Hairpieces Claim Form
 - Wig/hairpiece receipt
 - Your medical certificate
 - PAYEE number application;

To Ministry of Health, Private Bag 1942, Dunedin 9054 for repayment and to receive your PAYEE number

This is not my first claim:

1. Pay for your wig/hairpiece, keep the receipt and complete the Wigs and Hairpieces Claim Form (please ask your AYA Keyworker for this claim form if not received with this booklet);
2. Send the following:
 - the Wigs and Hairpieces Claim Form
 - the Wig/hairpiece receipt to;

Health PAC, P.O. Box 1026, Wellington for repayment

Keep a record of how much I have spent

Eyebrows and eyelashes

Losing your eyebrows and eyelashes can really change your appearance. However you can learn to create new eyebrows with an eyebrow pencil and apply false lashes.

- The staff at make-up centres are great at assisting you with finding helpful products and showing you how to use them.
- YouTube tutorials can also be great for showing you how to be creative with make-up.



Look Good Feel Better classes

'Look Good Feel Better' provides free workshops for young adults to help with some of the side-effects you may experience as a result of cancer treatment.

The two hour workshops cover skin care, skin changes and makeup application. This is a hands-on-class where trained volunteers guide you through how to use different skin and make-up products. And best of all, you will be given some of the donated skin care and cosmetic products to take home as a gift.

There are also live online video classes that you can register and attend (these are currently not AYA specific).

For more information on the young adult workshop and any other classes that they run please contact Look Good Feel Better on **0800 865 432** or email info@lgfb.co.nz. Alternatively your AYA Keyworker can assist you with linking in with a workshop.

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Will my hair grow back?

Your hair may grow back before you finish your treatment.

At first the hair is very fine but you are likely to have a full head after 3-6 months of treatment. You may find that your new hair is curlier or finer than it was before. It may also be a slightly different colour. As soon as it is long enough to style, you may feel that you no longer want to wear your wig or headwear. Young people who were used to long hair often find a shorter style to suit them. Your hair dresser should be able to help you choose a suitable style.

Many young people also ask about hair extensions; once your hair is long enough this option may suit you. Any money left over from your wig and hair pieces service payment can be used towards purchasing hair extensions. You do require a separate medical certificate for this. Please ask for one of these from your nurse.

Although it is unusual and rare, after some high dose chemotherapy the hair does not grow back. If this occurs please discuss with your doctor.

If you are to receive radiotherapy your hair may take double the time to grow back and it may not be as thick in that area. It is not uncommon to have some permanent hair loss after radiotherapy, or for it to grow back patchy. Unlike chemotherapy radiotherapy causes hair loss only in the area being treated. For example if having radiotherapy on your scalp it will only be that area where the radiotherapy beam goes in that is affected. In most cases the area of thinning can be covered and camouflaged by surrounding hair.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any information in this brochure, please discuss with your AYA Keyworker or health care team.

INFORMATION

For further information go to: ayacancernetwork.org.nz

 AYA Cancer Network Aotearoa  @NZayacancer  ayacancernetwork

