

ORAL CHEMOTHERAPY EDUCATION



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ALOPECIA/HAIR LOSS

Hair loss, or alopecia, is often thought of with chemotherapy, but not all anti-cancer drugs cause this side effect. Hair loss can refer to hair thinning that is not noticeable to others, to complete hair loss. Alopecia can be the loss of hair anywhere on the body, including the head, the eyebrows, arm or facial hair. If an oral anti-cancer drug has a side effect of alopecia, it will usually cause mild hair thinning and not complete hair loss.

To minimize hair loss, brush your hair gently, and avoid permanents (“perms”) or dyes in your hair. Your healthcare team or cancer support group can help you find wigs if you’d like to use one, and scarves can be a good option. Biotin is a supplement commonly used to support hair health. If you are interested in alternative supplements, ask your healthcare team to be sure the supplement does not interact with your treatment.

Lost hair will usually grow back after cancer treatment has stopped, but it may look different when it grows back. It might be a different color, be curly rather than straight or have a new look or feel.

Examples of Medications That May Cause Alopecia (not intended to be an exhaustive list)

Minimal risk (< 1%)	ibrutinib, venetoclax, olaparib, enzalutamide, abiraterone, alectinib
Mild risk (< 10%)	imatinib, capecitabine, dasatinib, sunitinib, anastrozole, osimertinib, everolimus, tamoxifen
Moderate risk (10%–35%)	nilotinib, cabozantinib, palbociclib, letrozole, exemestane, lenvatinib
High risk (> 50%)	temozolomide, vismodegib

Resource: <https://hopescarves.org>

Additional instructions

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