



## Body and Self-Image

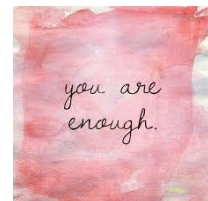
### Key Points

- Stay as active as you can. It helps you keep a positive outlook.
- Physical changes such as hair loss and weight changes may be temporary or permanent. Preparing yourself can help you cope with the changes.

- Cancer and its treatment can change how your body looks, feels, and works.
- Physical changes may affect how you think and feel about your body, your appearance, and yourself. For some, those feelings mean becoming self-conscious, embarrassed, or ashamed. For others, it challenges their view of who they are.
- Physical changes such as hair loss and weight changes may be temporary or permanent. Either way, you will have to figure out how to cope with them. Preparing yourself can help change the way you look at yourself.
- Understand that it is okay to be upset about changes in your body but also know that accepting those feelings is part of the healing process.

### What Can You Do?

- Try to be physically active. Physical activity has been linked to lower rates of depression among cancer survivors. Talk to your doctor about what activities are right for you and see the patient education sheet, *Activity & Exercise*.
- Talk to your health care provider about your mental health before, during, and after treatment.
- Keep track of your anxiety, depression, and other concerns.
  - When the initial shocks of diagnosis and treatment are behind you, you may begin to reflect on how your body has changed and how you feel about it. You may begin to change the way you see yourself and start building towards 'new normal'. Though this is a positive process overall, it may involve some over what has changed – and that is normal.
- Visit the Roswell Park Resource Center for information and support to guide you through your survivorship journey.



You  
your  
grief

- Understand that the way you look and feel is temporary, regardless of sickness or health. Anyone's appearance can change for a period of time for whatever reason.
- Although the changes brought by cancer may sometimes bring feelings of fear, anger, and frustration, many people say they have had positive feelings as well, including:
  - appreciation for the strength of their bodies
  - feelings of gratitude and peacefulness
  - appreciation that life is meaningful
  - new relationships with caregivers and other patients
  - a change in priorities and new perspectives about meaning in life and their goals



## Hair Loss

- You may be surprised by your strong reaction to losing your hair. Perhaps it made cancer real for the first time, or you just weren't prepared for how you look.
- If you had hair loss, you may have lost all hair from all over your body, or maybe the hair on your head thinned out. Either way, your hair may start growing back during treatment or 3-6 months after treatment ends.

### What Can You Do?

- ✓ Be proactive. If you recently finished treatment, ask your doctor if they expect your hair to grow back and when you can expect it to begin.
 

Until it grows back:

  - Hats, scarves, and caps may help you feel better about your appearance while preventing heat loss and protecting your scalp from the sun.
  - Get a wig or other head covering. If you have lost your hair due to treatment, the Resource Center for Patients and Families offers one wig and one head covering per year at no cost, even if your treatment has ended. Wig stylists are available once or twice a week. You can make an appointment to get your wig styled. The Resource Center is on the first floor of the hospital, in the cafeteria. It is open Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The phone number is **716-845-8659**.