

Wigs, Turbans and Hats, and Skin Care

Wigs

Tips on Getting Ready for a Wig

Many women have found that it is best to cut their hair short before they start chemotherapy. It's less traumatic to lose short clumps of hair than long ones—and it's easier to fit a wig over less hair.

If you get used to short hair, you won't have to wait as long for your hair to grow back to feel like yourself. Shorter is also cooler—an important consideration because wigs can feel hot in the summer.

Since a short-haired wig is easier to wear and care for, if your hair is already short you'll have an easier time living with temporary hair of a similar length.

Wig Choices

Try to pick out a wig before your chemotherapy begins. You'll have more energy and the stylist will be able to see your natural hair color and style. You can get used to wearing the wig in trial sessions, alternating with your own hair.

Wigs come in all styles and colors. A wig made of real hair could cost between \$800 and \$3,000 or more, and requires more care than you give your own hair. Most women choose synthetic wigs. They look and feel good, need very little attention and care. And cost much less (\$30 to \$500).

The wig needs to be comfortable, not lined with material that's going to feel scratchy against your scalp. (Remember that most wigs are designed for women who have some hair.)

See the section on **Wig Care** for additional information.

Color is probably the most important quality in choosing a wig. Select a somewhat lighter color than your own hair, for two reasons:

- Your skin color may be off during chemotherapy. Less contrast is generally more flattering, and won't call attention to your complexion.
- Wig hair is usually thicker than your own hair. So while the shade may be the same as your hair color, the wig will appear darker.

Consider a completely fun wig that will boost your mood when you look in the mirror. Try a new color, a new length, a new style.

Local and Nearby Wig Sources

Boutique at CRC

The **Boutique** is at the **Cancer Resource Center** at 612 West State Street in Ithaca. There is an inventory of new and gently used (cleaned and styled) wigs that are available free of charge.

There is no need to make an appointment to visit the Boutique and you can try on as many wigs as you wish. The private room has mirrors and visitors can bring friends to help make their selection. The Cancer Resource Center encourages you to take several wigs, wear them in different settings, and keep as many as suit your needs. Others can be returned.

CRC is open all weekdays from 9-5 and Tuesdays until 7. The phone number at the center is (607) 277-0960.

Upper Level

Upper Level Hairstyling is at 512 West State Street in Ithaca. The owner, Lisa Camilli, has special training and many years of experience in working with women who have cancer—not only with their hair but also with makeup. She also has toupées for men.

Lisa prefers to work with women before they lose their hair. That allows her to select wigs that are as close to a woman's original style as possible. She acquires new wigs and donates them to wearers. She has training in measuring for new wigs and can also fit a woman's own wig to her head. She will trim and shape wigs if needed.

Lisa offers additional services. She knows scarf tricks, wig care, and teaches the **Look Good/Feel Better Program** through the American Cancer Society. Individuals register for this program through the ACS at (800) 227-2345.

You may reach Lisa at (607) 273-1555.

Haute House

Brothers Ed and Erick Hendricks are the owners of **Haute House** (formerly **Salon Escape**) at 609 West Clinton Street at the Clinton Plaza in Ithaca. They offer wig sales and service. The latter includes reshaping, recurling, custom coloring of human-hair wigs, and restyling. They can, for example, smooth a wig that is especially curly or frizzy.

Their shop is open from Tuesday to Friday from 10-8 and on Saturdays from 8-6. Call them at (607) 257-7911 or visit their web site at <http://local.yahoo.com/info-35114313-salon-escape-ithaca>.

TST-BOCES

The Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga **BOCES Cosmetology Program** is on Warren Road, across from DeWitt Middle School. It offers free, reconditioned wigs and wig care. Appointments are scheduled on Fridays between 8:30 and 10:30. Speak to Mrs. Perkins at (607) 257-1551.

Hot Coco's

Hot Coco's Beauty Supply is at 4200 South Salina Street in Syracuse. They know how far that is from Ithaca, so they offer a discount of 15% off your purchase. A wide range of care products is also available.

They carry wigs for people from a wide range of ethnicities, as well as those for men and for children as young as 7 who have cancer.

Hot Coco's carries human-hair wigs as well as synthetic. All care and styling is included in the price of the wig. Sales people are trained to help make selections as close as possible to your previous look, but also encourage customers to try new and flattering styles.

The staff is used to interacting with people who have cancer. The atmosphere is leisurely and relaxed. Customers do not have to make an appointment ahead of time. You are welcome to call for directions or other information at (315) 422-6262.

Online Sources

Known sources of wigs online are:

- **Paula Young Wigs** at <http://www.paulayoung.com/>
- **Wilshire Wigs** at <http://www.wilshirewigs.com/>
- **tlc** (Tender Loving Care), affiliated with the American Cancer Society, offers products for hair loss and mastectomy supplies at <http://www.tlcdirect.org/>

You can also use a search engine like Google to look for *chemotherapy wigs*. A search of fairly close large cities—Binghamton and Syracuse—resulted in a number of retailers.

Wig Care

Wigs are formed on an open-weave mesh that allows for ventilation. They are fitted with adjustable tapes along the temple, with elastic and Velcro around the ears. They wash easily (every two weeks is recommended) and you can set them with sprays or gels.

Do not try to dry them with a hair dryer or curling iron. Heat can soften the glue and cause the wig to lose its shape. In addition, be careful when you're cooking. Some women have been known to singe their bangs while taking pizza out of the oven!

How to Care for Your Wig

1. Gently brush the wig or hairpiece to remove teasing or tangles.
2. Add one teaspoon of shampoo to two quarts of cold—never hot—water. You can use special wig shampoo or regular shampoo.
3. Soak 3-5 minutes, then gently swish up and down. Do not rub.
4. Rinse thoroughly in cold water.
5. Pat out excess water with a soft towel. Do not squeeze or twist. Do not brush or comb until completely dry.
6. Allow the wig or hairpiece to dry at room temperature by draping it over a slender canister to allow air circulation. Never put a wig on a solid head stand or block, as that will stretch the cap.
7. When the wig is completely dry, it is ready to brush or comb. No setting is necessary because its preset body will bounce back to its original shape.

8. Do not use a hair dryer, a blow dryer, or a curling iron. Avoid excess heat. Sudden bursts of heat—such as opening an oven door—can damage your wig.

Wig Care Supplies

You can use special wig shampoo or regular shampoo. There are at least two local (Ithaca) suppliers of special wig shampoo:

- **Sally's Beauty Supply** has not only the shampoo but also special nets. The shop is located at the Cayuga Mall which includes TJ Maxx and Big Lots. The number is (607) 266-0982.
- **Upper Level Hairstyling** is at 612 West State Street. The number is (607) 273-1555. The owner, Lisa Camilli, *provides, styles, and cares for wigs free of charge for cancer patients.*
- Some beauticians (for example, Becky McIlroy at Talk of the Town) are willing to order special wig shampoo and conditioner at the request of a client.

Turbans, Hats, and Scarves

Turbans and hats are a lovely alternative to wigs, which some women find hot and uncomfortable to wear. An advantage of the **Boutique** at the **Cancer Resource Center** is that people may make a free selection of all kinds of headwear to take home and try out.

The types, colors, and styles of turbans, hats, and scarves are limited only by what is available at any given time at the center. Most have been made and donated by generous women in the area. Once you have found items that are becoming and meet your needs, you may choose to buy similar ones online.

Turbans, hats, and scarves are available online through several catalogs.

The BeauBeau at <http://www.4women.com/>
 tlc (Tender Loving Care) at <http://www.tlcdirect.org/> (which also sells wigs)
 Just in Time at <http://www.softaths.com/>

Skin Care

The **Look Good...Feel Better** program is a community-based, free service that teaches women cancer patients skin care and beauty techniques to restore their appearance and self-image during chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

The program is offered through the American Cancer Society. To register, call (800) 227-2345. In the Ithaca area **Lisa Camilli** at **Upper Level Hairstyling** has been trained in Look Good...Feel Better and has taught it many times. Her training includes

- how to prevent your head from itching and burning under a wig
- make-up tricks like how to put on brows and lashes
- oral care
- cautions using pre-diagnosis make-up (which harbors bacteria and treatment lowers immunity).

The above information was gathered from a number of sources, including breastcancer.org, interviews with a number of stylists, and the generous input of the CRC Friday Brown Bag Lunch Group women.