

A magazine for women affected by cancer

# Brighter

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Issue 13



# Hair Hopes and Happenings

*My hair is coming back!*

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*This series was designed to provide you with practical information about your hair, including tips and tricks to help you navigate the changes before, during, and after treatment.*

*This is the final installment of “Hair Hopes and Happenings,” and we are finally at the point to discuss grow-back strategies. If treatment is over and your hair is returning, you likely have some questions about managing your new hair.*

*Here are ten frequently asked questions:*

## Can I take hair growth serums to speed up hair regrowth?

During the course of your treatment, it is advisable to avoid using any follicle stimulating hormones or substances that promote cell turnover, including lash and brow growth serums. After completing your treatment, consult with your oncology team regarding the usage of any growth products. Each doctor’s approach may vary, and because they are well-acquainted with your unique situation, it is best to seek their approval before proceeding with any such products.

## My hair is coming back differently. What can I do?

I recommend incorporating a regular dry brushing routine for both your skin and scalp. There is a wealth of information readily available on this topic with a simple online search. The basic idea is to use a boar bristle brush that is firm but not too hard, with uniform bristle length. You can do this in the shower or before taking a bath to gently brush your body, effectively removing dead skin cells and naturally stimulating your hair follicles. This process leaves your skin feeling exceptionally smooth and naturally exfoliated.

When it comes to dry brushing your scalp, it can be a fun activity to share with a young one. They can do it to you while you are reading them a story, creating a bonding experience that both of you will enjoy. Additionally, for styling newly grown hair, I recommend using a flexible hair product to manage your hair and regularly trimming the ends until you achieve your desired length.

## My hair is not as thick as it once was. What can I do?

The thickness of your hair can be affected by the course maintenance therapies. In this case, it’s advisable to consider a hairstyle that can create the illusion of more volume. For example, you might want to opt for layers instead of maintaining a uniform length. Alternatively, it could be that you simply haven’t given your hair enough time to recover before trying to gain length. Consider keeping your hair trimmed and shorter for a few months following treatment. You can still achieve a deliberate and stylish appearance

by letting the front grow slightly longer than the back and sides. Style it with a pliable product, such as molding cream, to give it an upward lift, while keeping the sides and top smooth. This approach will give your hair a more dimensional look.

## My hair is at an awkward stage. What can I do?

Keep it trimmed to maintain a neat appearance. Lean in to some short styles; this can help you wait out some of the different stages it will go through before you regain length. Continue your dry brushing routine even when you have full scalp coverage. If your hair is coming in curly, but only in spots, you may need to adjust the products you are using to help manage these areas. You can ask your hairstylist for best practices. Your licensed hairdresser can also help you map out a grow-out strategy. Use this time to imagine a new hair style that may suit your life better at this time. You can always wear a wig or hat, even with your own hair underneath, for special occasions or until you are happy with the length and style of your new hair.

## When can I color my hair?

Many women experience hair changes following treatment, including the appearance of gray hair. Interestingly, this has contributed to the recent popularity of embracing gray hair. A quick online search reveals individuals of all ages, from the young to the young at heart, either dying their hair gray or opting for gray wigs. However, if embracing gray hair is not part of your plan, it’s essential to consult with your oncology team to determine when it’s safe to resume any chemical hair services. Each doctor has their own set of guidelines for when you can resume chemical processes such as coloring, relaxing, or perming your hair. Once you receive the green light, it’s advisable to perform a test patch, as the changes in your hair’s condition following treatment may affect how your hair “typically” has responded in the past.

## How long until I have good hair coverage?

Your hair will grow at approximately one half inch per month, so as a general rule, in one year you will have about six inches of hair. With this as a guideline you can look for scalp coverage around three months, although I recommend you keep it trimmed to help the hair look and feel its best while you are growing it out. Many women opt to go without their wig once they have enough coverage of their own hair, and this is when they experiment with headbands and short styles they would not have otherwise considered.

## Can I put oil on my hair/scalp when it’s growing back?

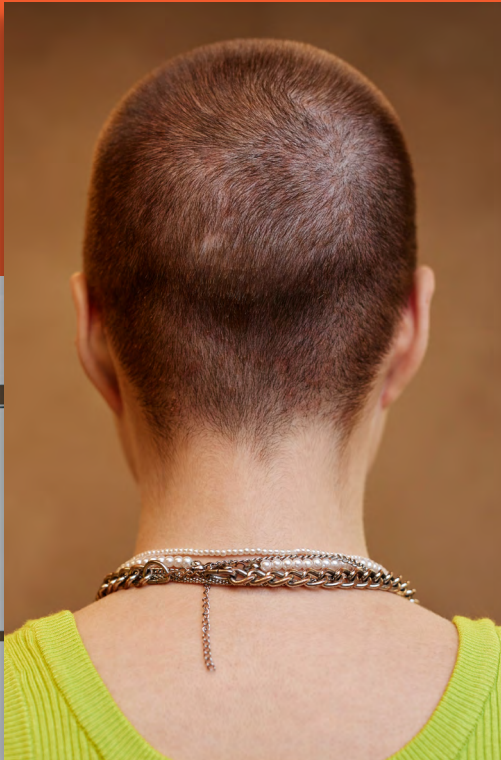
You can continue to enjoy your scalp care routine even after your hair has regrown, but it’s important not to apply oil to your hair or scalp during the day, especially when you’ll be exposed to direct



sunlight. (This includes being outdoors, in your car, or in proximity to the sun.) The reason for this precaution is that the oil can make your hair and scalp more susceptible to sunburn. Instead, it's advisable to use oil at nighttime. You can generously apply it to your scalp and work any remaining oil into your hair. To prevent any mess as you sleep, consider using a plastic hair cap, which you can find online or at a beauty supply store. Alternatively, you can wear the oil at night while at home and then shower before bedtime.

What shampoo is safe for my hair?

Look for a shampoo that is free of parabens and sulfates, opting for one that is gentle and mild on your hair. Many personal care products now proudly advertise their paraben and sulfate-free formulations, simplifying your search for the right products to meet your needs. These shampoos



can be readily found in salons, drugstores, or online. Be cautious of shampoos that promise to enhance volume or thickness, as the ingredients often employed to achieve these results can potentially have adverse effects on your hair growth. It's advisable to stick with simpler, more basic options.


Should I cut my hair if I used cold caps to even out the length as it grows back?

Your hair regrowth goal will determine the extent and duration of hair trimming required before blending it with your new growth. In some cases, even with long hair, layers may be incorporated to enhance shape and styling options. Specific hair goals provide a way to collaborate with your stylist in coming up with regrowth strategies, allowing you to maximize the potential of your hair's varying lengths, which are a result of both new growth and your existing hair. As your new growth comes down around to the crown of your head, it opens up more styling possibilities, with natural settling on the sides due to the added weight of increased length.

Can I get extensions?

If waiting for your hair's length and thickness to naturally return is not in your wheelhouse, you might consider exploring hair extensions. Like anything new, there is a bit of a learning curve if you've never taken this route before. As long as you have enough hair beyond the crown of your head, where the sides of your head begin, you should be able to enjoy various types of extensions.

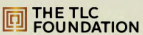
You have the option to purchase extensions either online or at beauty supply stores. Apply them at home for daily use, inserting them during the day and removing them each night. Alternatively, you can choose to have a licensed hairstylist professionally apply the extensions, which will typically last for about 4 to 6 weeks before needing adjustments. When going the professional route, it's important to ensure that they use a bonding method such as glue, sewing, or tape-in techniques, rather than metal clamps. Using metal clamps may lead to complications, requiring professional removal and incompatibility with follow-up MRI scans as part of your post-treatment care, as metal is not compatible with MRI scans.

This concludes the three-part series on Hair Hopes and Happenings - before, during, and after treatment. I hope you have enjoyed this series and found it helpful. I wish you all the best with your new life after treatment. 

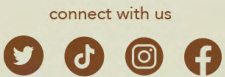


Reimagine your hair,  
your wig, your post-chemo extensions.

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