



The Clatterbridge
Cancer Centre
NHS Foundation Trust

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Scalp Cooling

Nursing

A guide for patients and carers

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Chemotherapy induced alopecia is widely documented as a cause of massive upset to patients undergoing treatment for cancer. Although not all chemotherapy drugs cause alopecia it is the initial stereotypical thought that the hair will fall out. This has been the single reason that patients have refused to partake in treatment regimens because the psychological impact would be too great to bare.

Chemotherapy drugs are powerful and attack rapidly growing cells with hair follicles being one of them. The hair will usually start to fall out approx. 2-4 weeks following the first treatment. Not all chemotherapy drugs cause alopecia and the severity of the hair loss depends on the drug being given. Some patients may lose all of their hair whilst others it becomes patchy. The hair can fall out all at once or it can be gradual. Some patients have explained that the scalp becomes tender before the hair comes away.

Treatment for this type of alopecia is limited and patients are always given the choice to obtain a wig, scarves or we discuss the use of the scalp cooling machines. As previously mentioned not all drugs/regimens cause alopecia so the clinician will advise if this will affect you. Scalp cooling reduces the temperature of the scalp, restricting the blood supply and protecting the hair follicles.



Weekly Taxol – 30 minutes pre cooling - 1 hour infusion - 60 minutes post cooling.

Docetaxel – 30 minutes pre cooling – 60 minute infusion - 20 minutes post cooling.

All other alopecia inducing drugs – 30 minute pre cooling - length of infusion - 90 minutes post cooling.

During the 30 minute pre infusion cooling, the cap cannot be removed. If you need to go to the toilet during this period, the 30 minutes will need to be re-started, please ensure you use the toilet prior to the cooling commencing.

If your treatment is being administered via a cannula, this will need to be inserted prior to the cooling commencing. This is because once the cooling process commences it can make your veins constrict to try and retain heat in the body making the cannulation process harder to achieve. If you have a PICC line in situ, there is no need to worry.

You may experience some pain in the forehead during the cooling period, using a stretchy fabric hairband can help to lessen this.

The first 10-15 minutes of the pre-cooling can be painful, some patients recommend taking mild pain killers prior to attending to help with this. They also recommend a distraction like music or a film to help. (Free patient WIFI is available on the unit)

What do you need to bring with you

A towel - while we can supply a towel, they may not always be available, please bring one with you.

A blanket - again this may not be available on the day of your infusion, please bring your own to manage your comfort during the infusion.

Conditioner - This is needed prior to the cap being fitted, for infection control purposes, please bring your own conditioner. (Information will be provided later re recommended products to use)

A stretchy fabric headband - this helps with comfort during the infusion.

A detangling hairbrush/comb - you will need to brush your hair before and after the infusion to prevent your hair becoming matted.

A spray bottle - your hair needs to be wet prior to the cap being fitted.

A hat/hoody - your hair will be wet on leaving the unit and you will feel cold after the scalp cooling, this will help to keep you warm on leaving the unit.



Warm comfortable clothing, think about layers to keep yourself warm.

The cap comes in 3 sizes, small, medium and large. The nurse will help you to determine the best fitting cap and document the size in your notes.

Once the fluid filled cap is positioned onto your head the outer cap is then fitted. This may be the same size as the inner cap or it may need to be smaller to really ensure that the fit is snug.

The cap is then tightened under the chin using a chin strap. This can be loosened once the cap is correctly fitted.



How you can help to prevent hair loss

Remove any thick braids, a weave or hair extensions as they can prevent the scalp cooling from working effectively, also don't have any relaxing treatments.

You should not dye the hair during scalp cooling, this is because hair dye can cause scalp sensitivity during chemotherapy treatment. It can also cause damage to the hair which may make it more unmanageable. If you want to dye your hair, it is recommended that you do this prior to commencing treatment, at least a week before you begin.

When washing your hair after commencing treatment, smooth shampoo and conditioner in rather than rubbing in a circular motion as this could lead to matting.

You can use clips and headbands, but it is not recommended to apply tension to the roots. If you want to tie your hair back, it is advisable to put into a low ponytail or braid.

If you have very curly or afro type hair, it is recommended that you don't wash your hair as often as normal as this will have a drying effect on the hair, it is also recommended to use plenty of conditioner or natural oils on the hair in between treatments, however don't use these on the day of treatment as they will make it harder to wet the hair prior to the cool cap fitting.



Haircare

Wash your hair with sulphate/paraben/colour and perfume free shampoo and conditioner, it does not matter which brand you use for this.

You can wash your hair as frequently as you need to, it is recommended to rinse your hair within 24 hours of using the cool cap.

You should be very gentle with your hair, a cool hair dryer can be used but it is recommended that you use your fingers for drying rather than a hair brush. It is advisable not to use any additional heat on the hair like hair straighteners or curling tongs as they can cause damage to the hair.

Additional information

If you require any additional information, this can be found at: Coldcap.com (Paxmans official website) Paxman are the company that make and supply the scalp cooling machines.

Here you will be able to find video tutorials and information about the success rates for different treatments.

Any questions can be directed to the chemotherapy nurse on the day of treatment.

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT SCALP COOLING IS NOT SUCCESSFUL FOR EVERY PATIENT

Notes



How we produce our information

All of our leaflets are produced by staff at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and this information is not sponsored or influenced in any way. Every effort is made to ensure that the information included in this leaflet is accurate and complete and we hope that it will add to any professional advice you have had. All our leaflets are evidence based where appropriate and they are regularly reviewed and updated. If you are concerned about your health in any way, you should consult your healthcare team.

We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. All of our information is in line with accepted national or international guidelines where possible. Where no guidelines exist, we rely on other reliable sources such as systematic reviews, published clinical trials data or a consensus review of experts. We also use medical textbooks, journals and government publications.

References for this leaflet can be obtained by telephoning 0151 556 5570.

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