

# Hair we grow again

As part of Breast Cancer Awareness month, we take a look at the different methods available to encourage hair regrowth after chemotherapy

**E**arlier this year, I attended ghd's launch of a new collection in collaboration with Breast Cancer Now. Not only did I get to see the iconic styling tool's fresh pink overhaul, but I also got treated to a presentation from a handful of women who had experienced chemotherapy. Having several friends who have undergone cancer treatment, I thought I would be prepared for this kind of talk, but it turned out that I had underestimated the real horror of not only cancer itself, but losing your hair – a feature that many women consider to be part of their identity. Luckily there are many initiatives out there that help cancer patients regain confidence in their appearance, such as My New Hair and Look Good Feel Better. One friend of mine and a cancer survivor, Jane, advises, 'Overcoming cancer is very much mental as well as physical; so, if you look good, you feel better and mentally stronger to cope and fight for the future', which I feel sums up this issue perfectly.

In this feature, we talk to experts in nutrition and massage therapy, as well as brave women who have faced cancer, chemotherapy and losing their hair.



Mr Filip Koidis, specialised clinical nutritionist and founder of London-based W1 Nutritionist clinics, discusses the importance of nutrition when considering hair regrowth

**What nutritional advice would you give to a client who has undergone chemotherapy and wants to encourage hair growth?**

This really depends on the type of cancer, how long has the client been suffering from the disease and which organ(s) it has affected, alongside the client's physiologic and body composition state. As a general rule, ensuring sufficient nourishment which would help the client achieve hers/his daily vitamin and nutrient needs (which change significantly post chemo) would be a priority. Following this, although there is limited evidence in the scientific literature, specific vitamin (such as Vitamin D3) and nutrient (conjugated linoleic acid) targeting alongside a tailor-made plan would encourage hair growth, whilst of course focusing on re-occurrence prevention.

**How long after adopting a nutrition plan would you start to see visible results in the condition and growing speed of your hair?**

This varies hugely with each case, depending mostly on the severity of the condition and the client's nutrition and body composition status. From clinical experience, and as some studies have shown, the first visible and measurable results can be seen within the first four to six weeks of the nutrition intervention.

**How active should we be in avoiding foods containing carcinogens? And is**



Amanda Barlow, MD of Spiezia Organics and Founder of the Made for Life foundation, talks about her Cancer Touch Therapy Course and how massage can encourage the body to heal itself

**What inspired you to come up with the idea for a post-chemotherapy massage course?**

To make sure that no one going through cancer was turned away from a spa – ever! We have been treating people with cancer for nearly 15 years with our Head in Heaven spa ritual which was created to ensure that people reached the parasympathetic level which is the state of relaxation where serotonin is released and cortisol reduces increasing the body's ability to heal. The course is an extension of

these protocols so people can access spa treatments tailored to their needs and condition.

The course was developed by working with oncology advisers and support from Macmillan, and all profits go to the Made for Life Foundation.

**Which of your products are used in this treatment?**

A selection of our 100% COSMOS/Soil Association certified products from the Body, Wellbeing and Facial range. Products used are tailored to suit the individual. For example, our Skin Solve with Calendula has shown to be really effective post radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Head & Hair Oil promotes scalp condition and healthy hair and Daily Radiance Face Oil with rose and vanilla is wonderful on two levels. Firstly, because of its synergy with the sebum of the skin and secondly research has shown that the soothing scent of rose is the last sense of smell lost through chemo.

**What are the benefits of this massage for those who have undergone chemotherapy?**

It is safe, effective and will allow people going through cancer to 'catch their breath', relax and take time out to boost their immune system. A caring touch is very powerful and when you are vulnerable and poorly, a gentle massage can help on both a psychological and physiological level. It will promote the release of oxytocin and boost your immune system and that has to be good – for anyone.

**it realistic or even achievable for the average person to adopt a carcinogen-free diet?**

In my opinion focusing too much on a 'carcinogen-free diet' is not the easiest way forward, especially given the plethora of misinformation in the Press promoting pseudo-detoxing diets and self-proclaimed 'superfoods'. Carcinogens exist in our food and our surrounding polluted environment, and the best way forward is to arm our body with the correct nutrition and lifestyle approach in order to help it fight any carcinogenic exposure. Aiming to include daily foods of plant origin, avoiding processed foods and unnecessary supplements (yes, even multivitamins can have a damaging and cancer-prone effect if not taken cautiously), limiting alcohol as well as maintaining a healthy body weight is a realistic approach for the average person.



Lizzie Monk, 36, from Birmingham, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013

**I had just got married when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, so my hair was probably the longest it had ever been, past my shoulders.**

When I knew it was likely to fall out through treatment, I decided to do something I would never normally be brave enough to try – so I went for a pixie cut! I actually really loved it, and even since my hair started growing back into a longer bob, people still say my shorter hair really suited me!

After my first chemotherapy session my hair thinned a lot and one day, while I was in the shower, bits of it started to fall out. I realised that I didn't want to live with the uncertainty, never knowing when I might wake up to another clump of hair on my pillow. I just thought, 'I'm going to take control of this myself.'

So, just three months after getting married, my husband sat in our home one Friday night and shaved my hair. And then I put my wig on, and we went out for a glass of Prosecco!



**Lush Honey I Washed My Hair Shampoo Bar, £5.95**



Michelle Johnson, 38, from Manchester, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2015

**My breast cancer treatment has been tough physically and mentally, but one of the things I struggled with most was losing my hair. My eyebrows and eyelashes also fell out, which happens to a lot of people during chemotherapy but you don't hear about as much.**

Even when wearing a wig on nights out with friends, I kept feeling that people were looking at me, and I found it hard to believe that my husband could still find me attractive with a bald head, even though we've been together for years and he was great at reassuring me. I have now started to get some control back by using different products to try and restore my hair. I used a Bar Shampoo and Roots Hair Treatment from Lush, which were recommended by other ladies who had gone through the same ordeal. Now I'm using Watermans Grow Me shampoo and I find it amazing – my hair feels thicker and has definitely grown more since I starting using it. I'm not fond of my current short, curly hair and find it hard to style. But hopefully one day it will be long enough for me to able to straighten again!



Joanne Clarke, 40, from Glasgow, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014

**I had worked on and off as a hairdresser for years – it was my passion, but for financial reasons I decided to branch out into something completely different and start my own cleaning business. I had only just registered the company when I got the devastating news that I had breast cancer.**

For me, losing my hair was one of the most traumatic parts of treatment. My sister knew how much it was getting me down, so she did some research online and came across the WOW Glasgow salon, which helps women who have lost their hair through chemotherapy and alopecia to find affordable wigs. The owner, Amanda, had had her own breast cancer diagnosis, so she understood what I was going through.

By November 2015, I was feeling so much more confident with my look that I was able to take to the catwalk for Breast Cancer Care's Fashion Show, where all the models are women who have had a breast cancer diagnosis.

And in fact, I loved the WOW salon so much that I now actually work there! It's great to be back doing the job I love, and helping other women face such a difficult time with more confidence.

**OUR RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS**

**New Nordic Hair Volume Tablets, £24.99**

**Lush Honey I Washed My Hair Shampoo Bar, £5.95**

**Philip Kingsley Trichotherapy Regime, £120**