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Information on Permanent Chemotherapy Induced Alopecia (PCIA)

Many chemotherapy drugs can cause hair loss. In fact about 60 -70 % of patients undergoing chemotherapy will develop hair loss. Usually hair grows back after chemotherapy is stopped. A small proportion of medications may result in the hair not growing back as full as before the chemotherapy. We call this "Permanent chemotherapy induced alopecia" or PCIA for short.

How common is this PCIA?

- The exact incidence of PCIA is not known.
- Temporary hair loss occurs with over 60 % of chemotherapy drugs.
- However, permanent hair loss is much less common

What causes PCIA?

- Certain drugs have been associated with PCIA. These include:
 - TAXANES (docetaxel, paclitaxel) used to treat breast cancer
 - BUSULFAN used to treat acute myelogenous leukemia
 - CISPLATIN used to treat lung cancer and other cancers
 - ETOPOSIDE used to treat many cancers
 - CYCLOPHOSPHAMIDE
 - THIOTEPA
- Hair loss is permanent in these conditions because the drugs are thought to permanently damage stem cells or growth cells in the hair follicle.

What do individuals with PCIA notice about their hair?

- Patients with PCIA experience hair loss after chemotherapy.
- However, instead of the expected full regrowth of hair 3-6 months after chemotherapy, the patient only experiences partial regrowth.
- Scalp hair does not grow long and patients may note hair loss is more marked in the front than in the back

Are there any special tests that are needed?

- There are many conditions that can mimic PCIA.
- Dr. Donovan will evaluate if you have another hair loss condition that may better account for your hair loss
- Blood tests may be recommended and possibly a scalp biopsy

What treatments are available?

- The hair loss in PCIA is permanent
- Minoxidil may be recommended to promote growth of existing hair follicles
- Dr. Donovan may advise other treatments as well.

What will happen to my hair in the future?

- It is unlikely that further loss will occur

