

My appearance

Cancer and its treatments can cause changes to your appearance or affect how a part of your body works. Some changes can be seen by others while others are more hidden. They can be temporary or permanent and can include:

- hair loss
- weight gain or weight loss
- changes to your skin or nails
- scarring or losing a part of your body
- a change to the way a part of your body works, for example a colostomy or urostomy
- lymphoedema (swelling of an arm or leg).

These changes may affect how you think and feel about your body ([your body image](#)).

This is common in people affected by cancer. You may feel anxious, less confident or worried about other people's reactions. Sometimes it may affect your relationships with others or stop you doing things you enjoy. Always talk to your nurse or doctor if you feel like this. They can give you support and practical advice.

Tips for managing changes to your appearance

- Ask your doctor or nurse to explain the [side effects of treatment](#) so you know what to expect afterwards. They can tell you if a cancer drug causes hair loss, skin changes or explain the kind of scar you will have after an operation.
- If you have hair loss there are different ways to cover it up if you choose. These include using hats, scarves or a wig. You can draw on eyebrows or use false eyelashes. [Boots Macmillan Beauty Advisors](#) can help with this. They are trained to help people manage the visible side effects of cancer treatment.
- You can use make up to cover changes to your complexion and nail varnish to hide discoloured nails. Boots Macmillan Beauty Advisors or Look Good Feel Better can help with this.
- If you have a scar or skin graft, camouflage make-up can be used to help cover it up. Changing Faces have trained skin camouflage practitioners. It may be possible to have surgery to improve the appearance of a scar.
- If you have lost a part of your body or a change in how it works try not to delay looking at the area. Doing this may make it harder to accept and take you longer to adapt. You may want someone with you the first time you look at it and to do it gradually.
- You may be able to have reconstructive surgery, such as breast reconstruction, at the same time as your first operation. You can also have reconstructive surgery years later.
- You may have difficult feelings or negative thoughts about your body image. A type of therapy called cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may be helpful. Ask your nurse or doctor about this.
- Take care of yourself and do nice things for yourself so your body knows you appreciate it. Try to feel good about your body getting you through treatment and what it does for you every day.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [Body image and cancer](#)
- [How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer](#)
- [Coping with hair loss](#)
- [Talking about cancer and your feelings - easy read](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan information

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk where you can [chat online](#) to one of our team.

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Other useful contact details

- **Boots Macmillan Beauty Advisors** – find your nearest advisor at boots.com
- **Look Good... Feel Better** – visit lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk or call **01372 747 500**
- **British Association of Skin Camouflage** – visit skin-camouflage.net or call **01254 703 107**
- **Changing Faces** – visit changingfaces.org.uk or call **0300 012 0275**

Notes and questions
