

Living With and Beyond Cancer Information Sheet

1. Appearance

Both cancer and its treatments can often have an impact on your appearance and how you feel about it. Some people find concerns about their appearance to be one of the hardest parts of having cancer. People vary, of course as to how much of their identity is invested in their general appearance or particular parts of their bodies. This affects the impact that a changed appearance has on particular individuals. So there can be huge variability in terms of how people respond to changes in their appearance. The effects of treatment such as hair loss, weight gain, scarring etc. can impact on everyday encounters and lead to anxiety, anger, frustration and distress, but these feelings are perfectly natural and normal. Stress alone can lead to weight loss. Some patients feel that others see them as ill and therefore will treat them differently, whereas some feel that the change in their appearance is a constant reminder of the illness. It does not matter how large or obvious a change in appearance is, whether the person is a man or a woman, if the change is temporary or permanent, or how old they are, it is how the change in appearance makes them feel that is important.

How can I manage these feelings?

- It is important to recognise that your concerns about your appearance are entirely normal and that many others often feel the same.
- What impact does your change of appearance have on how you feel about your body, and more generally on how you feel about yourself. For example, how do you feel now when you look at your body? How have you been feeling about yourself since having your operation/treatment?
- If you find you have started to avoid other people because of how you feel you look, consider how you might slowly confront these changes. You might start by looking at the part of your body you are most concerned about. Look at it (and touch it) until what you see no longer has much of an impact on you. It may take up to an hour at first before you become bored looking at it, but remember that feeling bored by something means that you are no longer having such a strong emotional reaction to it. Do this every day until you feel more confident looking at yourself. In time, if you wish and it seems appropriate, gradually allow other people to look at this part of your body so that they can get used to it and you can get used to them looking at your body once again. Try to say to the other person what you are feeling so that they can reassure you.
- You may feel you need extra support (e.g. the company of another person) as you re-engage with normal activities that involve seeing other people. If you worry about going out it can be helpful to talk through what you imagine might happen and, importantly, how you would handle it. Talking about your worries can be helpful, perhaps with a family member or close friend. Alternatively, if you feel particularly stuck with your appearance concerns, you may find talking to a professional such as a one of our Macmillan Cancer Care Counsellors. Ask to be referred to them by your CNS or keyworker.

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- Other people in your life, particularly partners, might also be having trouble adjusting to your altered appearance. Again, it is normal that people take time to adjust to change so try to be patient and understanding, rather than offended by their reactions. They may find it easy to talk to you about their concerns but they also might find it easier talking them through with a professional first.
- Joining a support group with people who are experiencing the same problems as you can sometimes help.
- Some appearance changes can be managed using creative practical solutions. For example,
 - Surgery scars – camouflage, corrective/plastic surgery
 - Amputation – prosthetics
 - Hair loss – hats and scarves, wigs, make up (such as eyebrow pencil) etc

It is important to note that **plastic or reconstructive surgery** will not restore the body or its appearance to exactly how it was before treatment and there will still be scars of some kind. In fact, the decision to undergo surgery to try to restore or reconstruct appearance can be difficult to make, so it is important to talk to health professionals about the options available in your case.

Local Resources:

<p>Lymphoedema Service, Barnstaple Health Centre, Vicarage Street, EX32 7BH By appointment only Monday - Friday 8:30 am— 4:30pm</p>	<p>The lymphoedema service is a nurse-led service providing individualised care and encouraging self-management through specialised treatment and education. The aim is to allow the individual to lead an independent life so far as possible. Referrals can be made by your GP, consultant or CNS.</p>
<p>Look Good Feel Better FREE! www.lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk Due to the COVID-19 pandemic no face to face workshops are being held at the moment, please click on the link to find out about LGFB virtual workshops. The face to face LGFB will resume at the Fern Centre. Please ask at Seamoor Unit reception or Visit the Fern Centre.</p>	<p>Look Good, Feel Better Offers free cosmetic makeovers, skin-care and makeup advice for women during their cancer treatment. The 2 hour workshops are informative and lively but most of all, fun - making this particular visit to hospital something to look forward to. The basic thinking behind the programme is if you look good, it may help you feel better. There will be a men’s programme for 2020/21</p>
<p>Boots Macmillan Beauty Advisors— FREE! Appointments last approximately 40 minutes To book an appointment please call 01271 326772(choose Option 5 then Option 1, to get to the beauty department) To book an appointment on-line please click on the link www.boots.com/no7-book-an-appointment Please note that due to COVID-19 normal services will not be resumed until it is safe to do so. Keep checking on the Boots website for details</p>	<p>No7 Macmillan Beauty Advisors are specially trained to offer make-up and skincare advice on how to help manage the visible side effects of cancer treatment, so you can start to feel more like you again. An expert will teach you specific beauty techniques, such as how to recreate brows and lashes, as well as how best to care for your nails and skin. This one-to-one class is typically held at the No7 beauty counter but private consultation rooms are available in most of our stores. If you would prefer a private room, simply contact your chosen store directly ahead of your appointment.</p>
<p>Bra Fitting Service at North Devon District Hospital This will take place in the Fern Centre as soon as is safe for our patients to attend. Please visit the Fern Centre Website or telephone 01271 311855 for more details You will be seen by Jackie from Nicola Jane and all appointments are arranged through the Fern Centre.</p>	<p>NicolaJane have been providing pocketed mastectomy lingerie and swimwear for over 30 years. Free professional fittings & advice for post surgery, if undergoing radiotherapy treatment or suffering with lymphoedema is offered. There is also a wide variety of prosthesis, including lightweight ones for swimming, to try if you are not sure you have the right one for you. Apart from own brand, products supplied are from other companies such as Amoena, Anita and Royce .If you have been thinking about getting the right fit and style for lingerie please use this service.</p>

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Local Resources *continued*:

<p>Wig Fitting and Care—Wigs can be purchased via wig referral. The cost of NHS prescription is £74.15 NDDH then make the total spend to £125. Please ask your CNS or oncology nurse for a referral form or contact Tony Miller/Rachael Watson—</p>	<p>There is a wig fitting/styling clinic with a team from John Lewis Exeter at the Fern Centre, however this service has been temporarily suspended because of COVID-19. Please call the Fern Centre for more details 01271 311855</p>
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National Resources:

<p>National Bra Fitting Service Nicola Jane—0845 2657595 www.nicolajane.com Silima — 01925 220524 www.silima.co.uk Eloise — 0845 2255080 www.eloise.co.uk</p>	<p>A list of companies for any enquiries regarding lingerie products and services following breast surgery. There is a bra fitting service within the NDDH. Please ask the Breast Care Team or telephone the Fern Centre 01271 311855</p>
<p>Macmillan Cancer Support Line www.macmillan.org.uk Call 0808 808 00 00 7 days a week 8:00am—8:00pm</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. Please note that calls to this number are not free when made from outside the UK. If you are calling from outside of the UK call on +44 207 091 2230</p>
<p>Macmillan on-line Community</p>	<p>Online support— to share experiences or vent your emotions find others who understand—join today!</p>
<p>Marie Curie Support Line — Living with a terminal illness and looking for support www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. The Support Line is open Monday to Friday - 08:00am – 6:00pm Saturday -11:00am – 5:00pm</p>
<p>Let's Face It— http://www.lets-face-it.org.uk/ Email: ssandra.smith@lets-face-it.org.uk face-it.org.uk Changing Faces— https://www.changingfaces.org.uk Skin Camouflage Service— skincam@changingfaces.org.uk Telephone: 0300 012 0276</p>	<p>For patients with facial disfigurements these organisations aim to offer friendship on a one to one basis and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To link families, friends and professionals To assist people with facial disfigurement to share their experiences, struggles and hopes To help them build the courage to face life again
<p>Breast Cancer Care Talk to breast care nurses 0800 800 6000 New FREE support app BECCA</p>	<p>Expert information for anyone diagnosed with breast cancer. Find out more about types of cancer, the treatment available and what this means for you.</p>

Other Resources :

<p>Feel more like you MAC14180</p>	<p>Talking about cancer MAC11646</p>
<p>Body Image and Cancer MAC14192</p>	<p>How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer MAC11593</p>
<p>Coping with hair loss MAC11627</p>	<p>Managing weight gain after cancer MAC12167</p>
<p>Cancer, you and your partner MAC12157</p>	<p>Breast Cancer Care Leaflets—Seamoor Unit and Breast Care Nurses</p>