

## Accessing Support: Body Image

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Undergoing cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy, and hormone therapy can cause changes to the way your body feels, works, and looks. It is normal to find these changes difficult, particularly as you are learning to adjust to differences in your body. To support you in this process, there are things you can try which might improve your body image, and places to get help and support.



Below is a list of organisations who may be able to offer you some support, as well as some resources that you may find helpful to read/listen to. The range and quality of services/support available from such organisations may vary. This list has been gathered as signposting only, and The Royal Marsden cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided by an organisation listed or the quality of their services.

If you have any questions or would like further advice/guidance about where to seek specialist help in your local area, you can speak with a member of your Royal Marsden treatment team or the Adult Psychological Support Service.

### Cancer Hair Care

A UK charity which supports those experiencing hair loss due to cancer. They offer a range of free information and advice, including in person or phone consultations, salon mornings, and informational booklets. They also run the [Wig Bank Plus Service](#), run by specially trained volunteer hairdressers at Cancer Hair Care. This service is available to individuals aged 18 and over in need of a wig who may not be able to purchase one. People can also donate wigs for others in need, which then undergo a hygiene cleaning process for new wearers.

Website link: <https://www.cancerhaircare.co.uk/>

### Look Good Feel Better

This charity aims to support the physical and emotional wellbeing of individuals affected by cancer through free online and in-person workshops, and video resources. The underlying principle of this organisation is that, through self-care and taking care of one's appearance, it is possible to improve your self-confidence following physical changes due to cancer. They have materials tailored to men, women and teenagers, and work to assist people of all skin colours, ages, and cancer variations. Workshops include skincare, nailcare, grooming, oral care, shaving, hair loss and wigs, make-up, and advice on nutrition and fitness. They work with people up to one year post active cancer treatment. They also run the [HeadWrappers Service](#), offering a range of workshops and classes that provide practical advice on caring for



your scalp and hair before, during and after cancer treatment. They also demonstrate useful scarf tying techniques, provide complimentary gift bags with headwear, and also help people connect with each other in a welcoming and safe space.

Website link: [A leading cancer support charity - Look Good Feel Better : Look Good Feel Better](#)

### **Macmillan “Body Image and Cancer” Booklet**

This booklet explores how cancer and its treatment may affect how someone thinks and feels about their body, and how this in turn may affect them psychologically or emotionally. It offers tips on adjusting to body changes, managing emotions, taking care of and learning to love your body, and what corrective steps may be available (e.g., reconstructive surgery, prostheses, camouflage makeup, scar-healing gels, steroid injections).

Website link: [Body image and cancer booklet | Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

### **Macmillan “Coping with Hair Loss” Booklet**

This booklet explains the effects of cancer treatments on hair growth, practical tips for preparing for and coping with hair loss, managing personal and other people's reactions to hair loss, options for covering up hair loss, what to do when hair starts to grow back, and what support can be accessed in the meantime.

Website link: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/stories-and-media/booklets/coping-with-hair-loss>

### **Breast Cancer specific resources**

#### **Breast Cancer Now’s “Your Body, Intimacy, and Sex” Booklet**

This booklet covers many topics including getting used to changes to your body, how breast cancer and its treatments may affect your sex life or intimate relationships, and offers tips on sex and intimacy after treatment. There are contributions from breast cancer patients throughout the booklet, concerning their experiences of certain issues, and strategies which helped them to manage.

Website link: [Your body, intimacy and sex \(BCC110\) | Breast Cancer Now](#)

#### **Breast Cancer Now’s “Breast Protheses, Bras, and Clothes After Surgery”**

A booklet that details the alternatives to breast reconstructive surgery following a mastectomy. It provides help in making certain decisions: the right breast protheses, the right types of bras to wear whilst the nerves repair and the tissue site recovers from surgery, and supportive clothes including active and sleepwear.

Website link: [Breast protheses, bras and clothes after surgery \(BCC123\) | Breast Cancer Now](#)



## Breast Cancer Now's "Breast Cancer and Hair Loss" Booklet

This booklet explores how an individual patient or their family may react to hair loss. It provides information on how to prepare for hair loss, what to do when hair begins to grow back, or strategies for when there are signs that the loss may be permanent, and what support channels individuals can pursue throughout their journey.

Website link: [Breast cancer and hair loss \(BCC54\) | Breast Cancer Now](#)

## Breast Cancer Now's Guide to a Well-fitting Bra

An information leaflet on finding the right bra fit following a mastectomy. It provides lots of diagrams illustrating where to measure and what the bra should look/feel like when on.

Website link: [Your guide to a well-fitting bra \(BCC196\) | Breast Cancer Now](#)

## Other APSS Information and Resources

The Adult Psychological Support Service has a range of signposting information sheets on topics such as: coping at different stages of the cancer pathway, supporting your physical and emotional wellbeing, relationships, and information specific to certain types of cancer.

You can view the signposting information sheets on The Royal Marsden's [Patient Information Library](#) and the [Adult Psychological Support Service Website](#) (under 'Further information and resources'). You can also request a copy of these by emailing [Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk) or telephoning **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea) / **020 8661 3006** (Sutton).

## Additional support services

### Cancer Care Map

An online database of cancer support services. You can search by postcode or by particular themes e.g. cancer type.

Website link: <https://www.cancercaremap.org/>

### Maggie's Cancer Centres

Cancer care centres with multiple locations, including The Royal Marsden Hospital, Sutton and Charing Cross Hospital, West London. Workshops, groups, information and one-to-one counselling available.

Website link: <https://www.maggies.org/>

Phone number: **0300 123 1801**

### NHS Talking Therapies

NHS website to help you find your local psychological talking therapies service based on your GP address. Your local NHS talking therapies service can be helpful if you would like psychological support for cancer when you are no longer regularly coming in for appointments at The Royal Marsden, as well as for concerns unrelated to cancer or that predated your cancer and have become worse due to it.



Website link: [Find NHS talking therapies for anxiety and depression - NHS](#)

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If you need any specialist and personalised advice about your cancer treatment, symptoms or side effects, please contact The Royal Marsden Hotline. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **020 8915 6899**.

The Royal Marsden's Adult Psychological Support Service offers short-term, cancer-specific psychological and psychiatric support. You can either self-refer or ask somebody in your Royal Marsden healthcare team to refer you. For more information, visit [Adult Psychological Support Service | The Royal Marsden](#). Alternatively, contact us directly on **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea), **020 8661 3006** (Sutton), or email [Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk).



If you have ideas for other signposting or information sheets, or if you would like to be involved in working with APSS to improve the service we offer, please scan the QR code to see more about our patient and public involvement, or email [Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk) or telephone **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea) / **020 8661 3006** (Sutton) with your ideas.

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