

LOCS and CANCER

What is cancer?

Cancer is becoming a household name in the community of deadly diseases. Generally, cancer is the name given to a number of related diseases. In not-so-boring scientific terms, cancer is a type of disease that occurs when some of the cells in the body begin to divide without control and start spreading into surrounding tissues and parts of the body.

Cancer cells are different from normal body cells in that, they do not stop growing. Normal cells on the other hand have mechanisms in place either to stop excess cell division or to remove old cells. .

It's quite unfortunate that black people and majorly black women are most affected by some of these cancers. [According to WebMD](#), the prevalence of these cancers is higher in black women:

- Breast cancer
- Colorectal (Colon and rectum) cancer
- Lung cancer
- Cervical cancer

Other cancers with lesser prevalence in black women include - Ovarian cancer, Melanoma, Leukaemia.

While all of this information might seem damning in some sort of way, the best way to treat cancer is early detection. This is so important to note because, cancer occurs in stages and at the early stages is where it is easiest to treat, which begs the need for regular testing, the questions of [when is the best time for me to get tested and how often should I get tested??](#)

- For women between the ages of 30-39, there is a need for breast cancer tests, colon cancer tests, and cervical cancer tests.
- For women between the ages of 40-49, you should start thinking about taking a colon cancer test. Starting from age 45, women should be tested yearly for breast cancers, because from this age they become more susceptible.
- From age 50-59, there is a risk of lung cancer, which is more apparent in smokers.

Beginning from age 30 and thereon, the importance of medical check-ups cannot be overstated. Although there might be some impediments to this, such as poverty, unavailability of funds, lack of education, etc., regardless of all of these limitations, there are channels and hospitals that offer free testing or at least discounted testing.

Forms of treatment include:

- **Chemotherapy:** You probably have heard the word “chemo” a lot, relating to cancer treatment. “Chemo” is a term used to refer to a method of treatment of cancer where drugs are used to try to eliminate said cancer cells.
- **Radiotherapy:** makes use of high-dose radiation to kill cancerous cells.
- **Immunotherapy:** makes use of drugs and supplements, aimed at boosting the body’s immune capabilities to fight off cancerous cells.
- **Hormone therapy:** involves taking medications that influence hormone interactions in the body.
- **Surgery:** when a cancer becomes far spread in an organ, it is advised that surgery be done to take that organ or body part off. An example, women that cut off a breast.

Of all of these forms of treatment, majority of them are extremely powerful and most times, when they work to kill cancer cells, they inevitably kill normal cells, especially fast-growing cells. They cause side effects such as the death of rapidly growing cells, e.g. hair cells in the head. This is what ultimately leads to hair loss and baldness of victims undergoing cancer treatments.

This is one major side effect we at [Kouturelocs](#), are concerned about. We begin to ask ourselves questions like; how do you manage hair loss if it occurs while receiving treatment? what can you do or take to improve hair growth? and if all the hair goes off what are alternatives that can be helpful?

Studies have shown that the side effects of cancer treatments manifest in different extents in different people because of the different levels of treatments, so while some people lose all of their hair, some others may just lose a little, in some others their hair becomes brittle. This brings us to tips that can be helpful both before and after hair loss starts to happen.

Before it occurs

- Give yourself time: although it might be hard to adjust to changes to your appearance, we advise that you do not be too hard on yourself, and try to accept that it is for the better good.
- Remember that you are still you: this is for people that see their hair as an identity. You need to actively remind yourself that nothing has changed and you are still who you are.
- Seek medical advice as to the extent of side effects to your body. How much would the treatment regimen affect you? the extent of hair loss or if there would be any at all?

When it starts

- You can consult with a hair specialist and loctician, and at [Kouturelocs](#) would be happy to give you the best advice on how to go about your hair, depending on recommendations from your doctor.
 - i. We would give you advice regarding the type and colour of hair covering to use.
 - ii. What to do with your locs when they start falling out and all sorts of hair-related matters.
- If you start to get depressed or start having it hard to handle, you can see treatment psychologists, who can help you as you go through this journey.
- Eating healthy: The importance of healthy eating at a time like this cannot be overstated. Healthy foods help nourish and revitalize your whole body, and your hair inclusive.
- Build a support system: At a time like this, where your strength might not be enough to carry you from day to day, you need a very stable support system of family and well-meaning friends.

All of these are all tips to help you in your journey to recovery, we wish you the best and we hope to see you soon and see you healthy.

Sources: [American Cancer Society](#), [National Cancer Institute](#), [Healthline](#), [Medicalnewtoday](#), [WebMD](#), [WHO](#).

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