

Being diagnosed with and treated for cancer changes a person. Some of the changes are physical, such as hair loss or the removal of a breast. Some of the changes are emotional or mental, including lingering mental foggiess from chemotherapy, depression, or feelings of renewed appreciation for life. Some changes are temporary, such as blotchy skin, and others are permanent, such as surgical scars. All changes, however, affect a person's view of himself or herself in many different and important ways.

Treatment for cancer can be rigorous and may change a person's appearance. The cancer itself can cause physical changes, too, especially if it affects hormones, blood cells, or organs that can decrease energy levels or food absorption. Some of the more common physical changes of cancer include:

- > hair loss (including hair on the head, face, arms, legs, underarms, and pubic area)
- > changes in weight, either gain or loss
- > changes in skin tone or color
- > disfigurement from surgery

Many people report that fatigue or loss of energy is the most challenging aspect of cancer treatment. Severe fatigue can cause an individual to give up activities that he or she once enjoyed.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES ASSOCIATED WITH CANCER AND CANCER TREATMENT

At the time of a cancer diagnosis many people begin to think about death in a very personal way. The process of discovering one's mortality in addition to the emotional and mental changes accompanying cancer treatment can be life-changing and sometimes frightening. It is not unusual for a person with cancer to experience the following emotions:

- > anger
- > a feeling of lack of control
- > sadness
- > fear
- > frustration
- > a change in the way one thinks about oneself and the future (including viewing one's self as a "cancer patient")

However, people with cancer have also reported positive changes in outlook including:

- > appreciation for the resilience of their bodies
- > peace
- > gratitude
- > awareness of the finiteness of life and therefore an appreciation for it
- > a shift in priorities

— from People Living with Cancer, www.plwc.org