

## Patient Advocate Corner

### Look Good . . . Feel Better Helps People Battling Cancer Help Themselves



Louanne Roark

By Louanne Roark

Courage, confidence, control, and community are all words used by cancer survivors to describe their experience with *Look Good . . . Feel Better*, a free, nationwide cancer patient support program for women, offered in nearly 2,000 hospitals and cancer centers nationwide. To the women who participate, the benefits are significant. Sitting around a table

with others in the same situation, they laugh, cry, share stories, and discuss their appearance concerns and favorite beauty secrets. Volunteer beauty professionals lead the discussion, offering practical tips about skin care, makeup techniques, and guidance for coping with hair loss. In the process, fears are diminished, friendships are formed, and self-esteem and a sense of normalcy begin to re-emerge.

For the past two decades, *Look Good . . . Feel Better* has transformed the lives of nearly 600,000 women of all ages and ethnicities, and with all forms of cancer. Through the program, patients have learned to mitigate the changes treatments have on their appearance that can affect their quality of life, confidence, and ability to cope with the disease.

In 2002, *Look Good . . . Feel Better* sponsored a survey\* among women treated for cancer within the last 5 years to better understand overall quality of life during treatment and the relationship between a woman's appearance and her sense of well-being.

- Seventy-nine percent said that cancer treatment had a somewhat negative or greatly negative impact on their psychosocial wellbeing.
- Sixty-seven percent said that cancer treatment had a somewhat or significant negative impact on their appearance.
- Seventy-eight percent said they experienced some or significant changes in their appearance during treatment.
- Eighty-three percent who experienced some or significant changes in their appearance associated with treatment said that their overall quality of life was impacted by cancer treatment.

The program was started by the Personal Care Products Council Foundation—the charitable arm of the Personal Care Products Council, which is the national representative

for the cosmetics and personal care products industry—and it is offered through a collaborative effort of the Personal Care Products Council Foundation, the American Cancer Society, and the National Cosmetology Association—an organization of 25,000 hair stylists, wig experts, estheticians, makeup artists, and nail technicians. These three organizations bring together their collective expertise to support and deliver *Look Good . . . Feel Better* programs (including bilingual programs) to 50,000 women each year.

In addition, a *Look Good . . . Feel Better for Teens* program is available for children ages 13 to 17 years in 18 locations across the country, and [www.2bMe.org](http://www.2bMe.org) offers an additional online resource for teens with cancer. Men are served through the *Look Good . . . Feel Better for Men* brochure and Web site, [www.lookgoodfeelbetterformen.org](http://www.lookgoodfeelbetterformen.org). This information includes a practical guide to help men deal with skin changes, hair loss, stress, and other issues.

*Look Good . . . Feel Better* participants tell us that the program is as much about how it makes them feel on the inside as what it does for them on the outside. One participant in Oakdale, Connecticut, said, “This program totally brought me back. I look and feel like my normal self again. This was the push I needed to get back on track.”

Another said, “This session helped me realize that I can get through chemo and still enjoy my life.”

Still another told us that “Cancer does a number on your self-worth and your self-esteem. This program made me feel better about me.”

The program can be just as powerful for your patients. To find out more, please visit [www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org](http://www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org), call 800-395-LOOK, or contact your local American Cancer Society office for local programs and availability.

*\*Study conducted by Harris Interactive of 267 patients; respondents qualified for participation if they were female and had chemotherapy or radiation therapy for cancer treatment within the last 5 years. Based on 267 completed online interviews, the overall margin of error for this study is ± 5.9 percentage points.*

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