

# Cranial hair prosthesis

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## Introduction

Cranial hair prostheses are addressed in this guideline.

## Health Equity Consideration

Health equity is the highest level of health for all individuals; health inequity is the avoidable difference in health status or distribution of health resources due to the social conditions in which individuals are born, grow, live, work, and age. Social determinants of health are the conditions in the environment that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks. Examples include the following: safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods; racism, discrimination, and violence; education, job opportunities, and income; access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities; access to clean air and water; and language and literacy skills

## Cranial hair prosthesis (wig) - criteria

A cranial hair prosthesis is indicated when an individual has hair loss due to **any** of the following conditions:

- Burns causing permanent alopecia
- Chemotherapy
- Congenital baldness
- Medication-induced hair loss unresponsive to other treatment
- Infections causing hair loss unresponsive to other treatment
- Lupus
- Radiation therapy
- Traumatic injury
- Other documented medical conditions that result in hair loss

## Criteria

A cranial hair prosthesis is considered medically necessary when an individual has hair loss due to **any** of the following conditions:

- alopecia areata/totalis/universalis
- burns causing permanent alopecia
- chemotherapy
- congenital baldness
- medication-induced hair loss unresponsive to other treatment
- infections causing hair loss unresponsive to other treatment
- lupus
- radiation therapy
- traumatic injury

### **Not Covered**

A cranial hair prosthesis is considered not medically necessary for **any** of the following conditions:

- hair loss due to natural or premature aging
- pregnancy or postpartum alopecia
- replacement of a lost or stolen hair prosthesis

### **Replacement hair prosthesis**

A replacement hair prosthesis may be considered medically necessary when **any** of the following apply:

- a significant change in the individual's physical condition (e.g., surgical changes, disease progression, or cranial shape changes) renders the current hair prosthesis unusable, as documented by the treating provider
- if the hair prosthesis becomes unusable due to conventional deterioration despite appropriate care

Replacement hair prostheses are considered medically necessary once every three years, with the three-year period beginning at the time the original hair prosthesis is purchased.

### **Evidence Discussion**

A 2022 study surveyed adults (n=552) with a history of alopecia to evaluate perceptions of hair prosthesis use and found that most respondents reported meaningful psychosocial benefit, with hair prostheses improving self-confidence (93.8%), mental health (88.5%), and social functioning (92.0%). The authors concluded that although

hair prostheses serve as an effective coping mechanism for both scarring and non-scarring alopecias and can significantly enhance quality of life, barriers such as financial burden, lack of education, and fear of negative social judgment may hinder optimal use; thus, clinician-led counseling or referral to hair prosthesis specialists may support more informed, effective, and emotionally beneficial hair prosthesis adoption (Cook et al.).

A 2025 study found that 31.4% of surveyed individuals with cancer (n=863) purchased hair prostheses, with younger age, female sex, and currently undergoing treatment emerging as the strongest predictors of hair prosthesis acquisition, underscoring the substantial psychosocial impact of cancer-related alopecia and the corresponding clinical need for appearance-related supportive care. The authors emphasized that alopecia profoundly affects body image, emotional well-being, social engagement, and treatment adherence, and that hair prostheses serve not merely as cosmetic aids but as essential therapeutic tools that help individuals maintain self-esteem, reduce social withdrawal, and preserve psychological resilience during cancer treatment. Consequently, the authors highlighted the clinical appropriateness of hair prostheses as part of comprehensive supportive oncology care and advocate for expanded financial assistance and structured appearance-care counseling to mitigate the emotional burden of treatment-induced hair loss (Katayama et al.).

## Codes

### HCPCS code descriptions

| HCPCS Code | Description         |
|------------|---------------------|
| A9282      | Wig, any type, each |

## References

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