

## WIGS FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN

### What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about the different types of wigs. It tells you what is a wig, types of foundations, how they are constructed, sizing, colour matching, how they are attached, how to care for your wig and where you can find out more about them.

### What is a wig?

A Wig is made from either human hair or synthetic fibre or combination of both, attached to a net or polyurethane/latex foundation and covers the entire scalp from forehead to nape and from ear to ear. It can be constructed in many ways such as ready-made wefted or machine hand tied (off-the-peg), or made to measure and knotted (bespoke).

Bespoke wigs are generally made with human hair of European origin, with ready-made wigs of human hair being of oriental origin. Within the ready-made wigs there can be a combination of human hair and fibre (synthetic) and it is not uncommon to have white fibre added to a human hair wig to give the appearance of a natural greying.

### What types of foundation are used for wigs?

- **Nets** are often used for bespoke wigs and are constructed on a nylon foundation with three types of net. The circumference is normally constructed with a fine netting known as stiff net. The frontal region from temple to temple on some wigs is inserted with opera lace (also known as French lace). Over the crown a caul net is used, which is an open elasticated mesh.
- **Wefted** wigs have foundations constructed by weaving strands of human hair, fibre or hair and fibre mix onto three strand of strong threads known as weaving silk (although threads are now made from nylon). Weft is cut into lengths and sown onto strips which form the shape of the head. The section over the top of the wig from front hairline to crown is sewn onto a closed lace to give depth and volume.
- **Capless** wigs are very similar to the Wefted wig design. However, they do not have the closed lace layer over the top of the wig from front hairline to crown. They are completely open-Wefted which reduces weight.
- **Monofilament** foundations are made from very fine net, lightly tinted in colour so as to blend with the skin tone, and into which strands of hair or fibre are individually hand knotted or machine hand tied.
- **Monofilament/Mono-Top** foundations have a region of the wig, usually from the front hair line to the crown, where a fine, skin toned, lightweight breathable nylon mesh is used and individual hairs are attached. This gives the appearance of fine knotted hairs growing from the scalp.
- **Vacuum Base** foundations are made from polyurethane or latex and designed to stay on by means of suction. The scalp needs to be completely free of hair and the foundation an accurate fit.
- **Lace Fronted** foundations have a small region at the frontal hairline with a fine lace net inserted into which individual hairs are attached to create a realistic looking hairline.

## **What are the advantages and disadvantages of fibre, human hair or fibre hair mix wigs?**

### **FIBRE**

#### **Advantages:**

- Appears to the naked eye as human hair
- Feels like human hair as it is now manufactured to give irregular shape along length.
- During wearing, moves like hair.
- Reflects light just like hair.
- Lightweight.
- Does not become heavy when wet or subjected to atmospheric moisture.
- Colour does not fade as quickly as human hair.
- Fibre length does not have any effect the final cost.
- Can be straight, wavy or curly with no effect on the cost.
- Consistency of quality and colour.

#### **Disadvantages:**

- Does not respond well to extreme temperatures such as from electrical styling equipment or hot water.
- Some fibre requires moisture and needs to be sprayed daily.
- Fibre is subjected to drying out which can lead to frizzing and matting.
- Restricted in stock colours

### **HUMAN HAIR**

#### **Advantages:**

- Wide range of colours.
- Wide range of lengths.
- Can be straight, wavy or curly.
- Can be professionally re-coloured.

#### **Disadvantages:**

- European Human Hair, normally referred to as Caucasian hair, has not had the cuticles removed which can lead to matting.
- Requires specialist cleaning and redressing by a wig maker.
- Time consuming to care for.
- Expensive, cost is governed by hair length, colour and availability.
- Colour fades more quickly than fibre.
- Much heavier in weight.
- No guarantee of consistency in quality.

## HAIR/FIBRE MIX

### Advantages:

- Reduces the overall weight of the wig.
- Prolongs the finished hair style
- Able to be shampooed and conditioned at home.
- Allows for more colour variation
- Helps to prevent fading

### Disadvantages:

- Fibre can become damaged if the wig is treated as human hair when being styled.

## In what sizes are Wigs available?

The sizes that are listed below are just a general guide line as measurements vary depending on manufacture;-

### Petite

Circumference: Around the Head - 20"

Front to Nape - 12"

Ear to Ear - 10"

### Standard

Circumference: Around the Head - 21"

Front to Nape 13" – 14"

Ear to Ear - 13" – 14"

### Large

Circumference: Around the Head - 23" - 24"

Front to Nape – 15"

Ear to Ear - 14" - 15"

Some wigs are now available with an adjustable foundation. These are constructed with adjustable draw-through cord/tabs which extend from the crown to the nape region, so that a large wig can convert into a standard wig, or standard can be converted to a petite size.

## How are wigs fitted/attached?

Some ready-made wigs have Velcro® fasteners at the nape. There is one fastener on each side of the inside of the foundation at the nape allowing the wig size to be adjusted for a more comfortable fit.

Double Sided Clear Toupee Tape is a surgical adhesive tape which is popular and widely available in shaped strips or in rolls.

## How do I select the right colour wig?

Ready-made pieces come in a standard colour range depending on the company and model of the wig, some using descriptive names, others a number code. It is advisable to look at the colour on a complete wig if possible rather than just a swatch to get the sense of how a block of colour looks. Bespoke pieces are colour matched from the wearer or from the wigmakers own stock hair samples. The wigmaker can offer the widest colour variation by mixing individual colours.

### **For what hair loss conditions are wigs appropriate?**

This is not extensive list but the more common conditions are:

- Alopecia areata (Patchy hair loss)
- Totalis/Universalis (Total hair loss)
- Androgenic alopecia (Hair loss over the crown region)
- Trichotillomania (Hair pulling)
- Frontal Fibrosing alopecia. (Destructions of hair follicle)
- Drug induced alopecia as in the case of Chemotherapy
- Telogen Effluvium (Periods of excessive shedding due to stress or illness)
- Scalp injury causing scarring (Permanent hair loss)

### **Will the wearing of a Wig interfere with my natural hair growth?**

No. If fitted correctly, it will not interfere with or block any potential hair regrowth. If the wig is ill fitting and causes prolonged trauma to the surface of the scalp, however then damage to the hair follicles may result.

There are alternatives for those who do not or cannot wear a wig, such as those with sensitivity to nylon. Fibre or human hair weft can be attached to the front of hats, turbans, head scarves and head bands.

### **How should I care for the wig?**

Some professional styling is required for any wig when first purchased, such as cutting, thinning and shaping to make it more natural and personalised. A professional wig stylist can help you achieve your look and show you how to use various wig care products and equipment. As with any product, please read the manufacturers' information provided with your wig

For ongoing care, shampoo and condition your wig with wig products frequently as your head is the hottest part of your body. The foundation traps your sweat and dead skin daily and, if this is allowed to accumulate, may bring about an irritation or an infection.

After shampooing and conditioning, a human hair wig will need to be styled as you would if it were your own hair, whereas a fibre wig can be left to dry naturally, then just combed or brushed back into style once it is completely dry. Fibre wigs have a permanent memory which allows the original style to be restored after shampooing and conditioning

Other products can be used, such as wig fibre oil, gel and hair spray and may prolong the fibre by reducing friction and reducing colour fading.

### **What are the side effects of wearing a Wig?**

There are some side effects which need to be considered for wigs wearers. There are psychological and emotional impacts for the new wig wearer which need to be considered. Some gentle guidance and in certain cases counselling may need to be sought.

Wearing a wig incorrectly, particularly too tightly, can cause pain and soreness around the hair line and also neck and shoulder pain from pressing on nerves. Wearing over the ears as if wearing a hat also causes pain and headaches.

### **Is there anything I should do or avoid whilst wearing a Wig?**

You should avoid over handling by constant touching, combing and brushing as this causes friction and reduces the life of the wig. When shampooing your wig, do not run hot water directly onto the wig as this has a damaging effect. This will dry out hair and make it look lifeless and with a fibre wig will melt the fibre. Avoid direct heat such as from the oven, standing away from the oven before opening the hot oven door and allowing the surge of heat to disperse before lifting or placing items into the oven. Overuse of curling irons and straightening irons on human hair wigs should be avoided as this will dry the hair and make it brittle and lifeless leading to breakage and reducing the life of the wig. Fibre wigs must not come into contact with curling irons or straightening irons as these will melt the fibre and this is irreversible. Sitting in direct sunlight for lengthy periods will also cause the colour of the wig to fade.

### **When should you not wear wigs?**

- If you have open wounds on or infection to your scalp.
- If you are allergic to the material of the foundation.
- If you have been advised against wearing by a medical professional or trichologist.

### **What is the difference between a wig purchased privately or offered via the NHS?**

The only difference in the wig itself is that with the NHS you are restricted to certain styles and suppliers. The wearer pays a prescription charge through the NHS and the short fall is made up by the NHS towards the final cost.

### **What is the cost of a wig?**

For those purchasing privately, costs can vary widely between different styles and manufacturers and, as already noted, human hair wigs will be more expensive than fibre ones. The initial cost of the wig will not usually include the cost of cutting styling to personalise your wig and most wearers would go to someone who specialises in this. Ongoing costs to be taken into account include cleaning, redressing, repairs and eventually replacement, as the average lifespan of a ready-made wig is around twelve months.

### **Where can I find out more about wigs?**

If you would like any further information about wigs please look on the Institute of Trichologist's website [www.trichologists.org.uk](http://www.trichologists.org.uk) for contact details for your nearest registered Trichologist.