

Donors enable The Skin Cancer Foundation to be there for people like me.



Dear Friend,

If you had told me two years ago that I would find out I had skin cancer at 16 years old, I would not have believed you. It just so happened I had a big physics test the day I got the results, but somehow, I still managed to ace it. Everything after that day changed.

I barely knew about skin cancer other than it could be caused by the sun and tanning beds, which I didn't use. But when I saw a dark and growing mole on my stomach, I knew something wasn't right. I went to a dermatologist who told me it wasn't what I thought, and not to worry because I was too young for skin cancer. I still wanted to get a second opinion and I'm glad I did. While the second dermatologist agreed that the mole that brought me in was not a problem, they noticed another spot that was even more concerning. Nine days later, I was diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma (BCC). That's when I started researching and found The Skin Cancer Foundation. I kept getting deeper into my research and felt like I was going down a rabbit hole. The realization that I had cancer really kicked in that night and I just started to cry.

I felt like I needed to do something right away. I instantly started spreading awareness on Instagram and Facebook and reposting content from The Skin Cancer Foundation in hopes that I could compel people to look for anything new, changing or unusual on their skin. **READ MORE »**



"I felt like I needed to do something right away...and you can too. Please donate today."



I had my surgery a month and a half later which I was very anxious for, but at least I got to miss school for the day! Mid-surgery when my surgeon and nurse walked away for a second to get something, I looked down at my chest where they were about to give me dissolvable stitches, because I was curious. I wasn't expecting the open wound to be so big. I don't regret looking, because to this day I would be wondering what it looked like. It didn't stop there, I ended up having five biopsies and because of that I have scars on my hairline, my back, my chest and two scars on my stomach, one of which is very large. The biopsy scar on my stomach actually affected me the most because it was where people would see it if I wore a bikini or a short shirt. When it came time to take off the bandage, I cried. The biopsy was so deep.

A year after finding out I had skin cancer I shared my story on social media for the first time. I got so much feedback on that post and everyone was so supportive. Up until then, only my family and a few friends knew about my diagnosis. I kept it private for a year because I wanted to learn more about skin cancer and didn't want others to treat me differently. **From that moment on, I made a commitment to work with The Skin Cancer Foundation** to raise awareness and educate others by sharing my story on social media and their blog.

At the end of my junior year in high school, I made a presentation to my AP environmental class about skin cancer. I had fun doing it because I got to learn even more facts and spread more awareness. Did you know BCC is usually a pink or a pearl color? I was shocked to learn that, because mine was brown! I also didn't realize how many types of skin cancers there are. I had no idea that in the U.S. more than 9,500 people are diagnosed with skin cancer every day and more than two people die of the disease every hour. Around the world more than 5,400 people die of nonmelanoma skin cancer every month.

Something else I have learned since having skin cancer is that people don't realize how serious it is. I can't even count how many times I've heard "it's just

basal cell" or "it's just a procedure and not actual surgery." There are so many people who downplay skin cancer because to them it's not actual cancer. I have seen so many TikToks of girls going to tanning beds and joking about how they are fine if they get skin cancer in 10 years as long as they are tan. I haven't gone through multiple biopsies, a surgery, and those horrible numbing shots starting at 16 years old for nothing. A lot of times I'll comment on their videos about how I got skin cancer at a young age, but sadly, that doesn't always do much. I'll keep saying it - just because it's rare at 16, doesn't mean it can't happen.

As it turned out, a year after my diagnosis and learning all about skin cancer and basal cell carcinoma (BCC), I noticed a raised spot on my mom's nose that she said just was a stubborn zit that wouldn't go away. I kept bugging her to get it looked at and it turned out it was a BCC. I'm glad I made her see a dermatologist! My mom got it removed and will always have a small scar on her face.

Through this journey, I've learned that all my scars are beautiful. The healing process takes some time, but in that time, I've learned to love myself in a different way. Instead of thinking about my scars negatively, I think about them as a symbol of being strong and vulnerable and surviving.

Now here I am, 18 years old and honored to share my story with you. Thank you for reading it! **The Skin Cancer Foundation has changed my life** in so many ways. I'm happy to be a part of an amazing community of people who are committed to making a difference in the lives of those affected by skin cancer. I hope you'll join us, too.

Please consider donating to support the Foundation's lifesaving programs. Your gift will help provide skin cancer detection, prevention and treatment education. The Foundation has been there for me in my most difficult times. Together we can be there for others affected by skin cancer and save even more lives.



Please fill out the provided envelope or visit **[Give.SkinCancer.org/HereToHelp](https://www.giveskincancer.org/HereToHelp)** to join us in the fight against skin cancer.



With all my heart,
Laura Anne Page