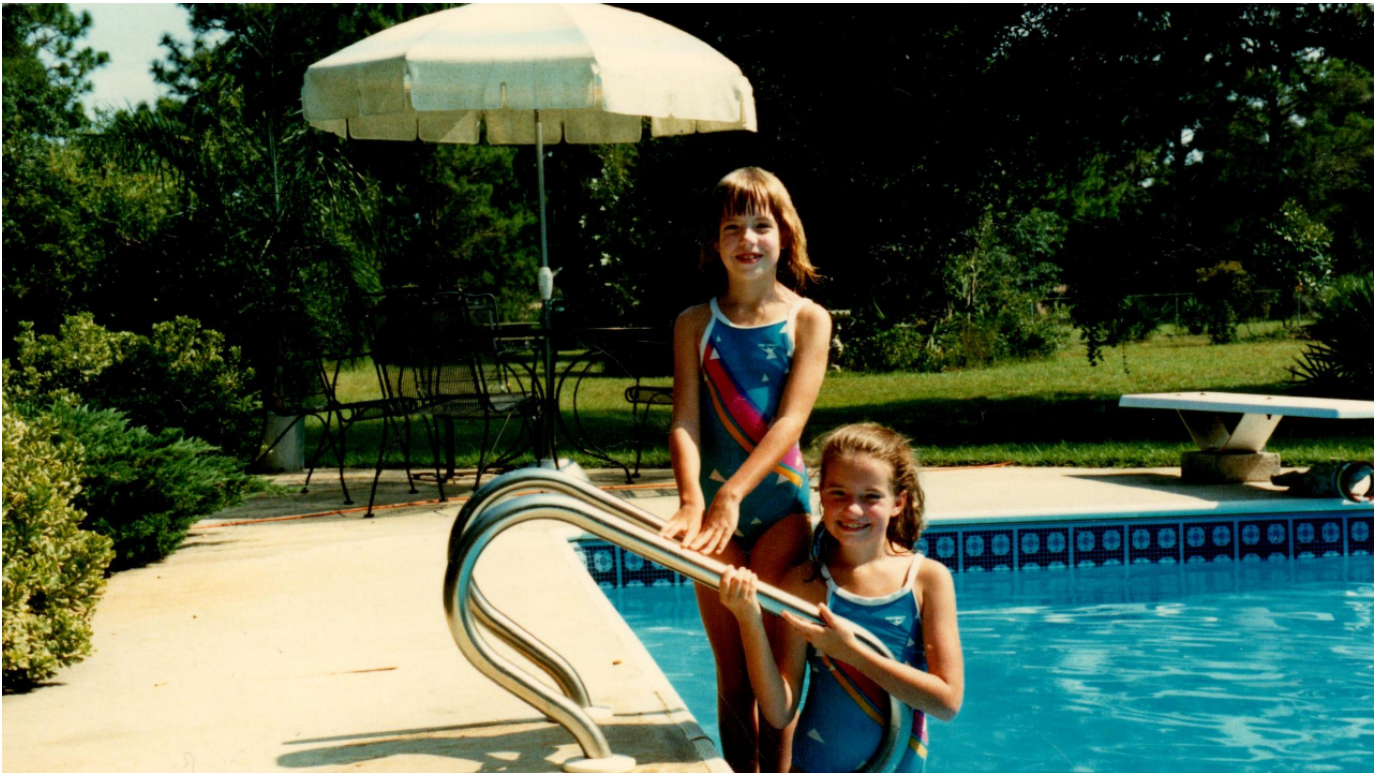


[Skin cancer screenings save lives, including mine](#)

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My sister (right) and I spent many summer days out in the sun when we were kids.

I love sunny days. Growing up in the South, sunshine often meant being poolside or at the beach. I was on the swim team for a few summers. Marching band practice in high school and college had me outdoors for hours every day. I went to tanning beds in the winter, so I'd be ready for Spring Break. My job as a news reporter often left me with a sunburn because I'd forget sunscreen during the daily rush.

A skin check by a dermatologist saved me a lot of heartache and, possibly, my life. The dermatologist found a small, dark mole on my left arm and removed it. A biopsy showed it was a melanoma in situ, stage 0. I was 26 years old. A minor surgery removed the cancer, a follow up scan of my lungs showed it hadn't spread, and I've been clear ever since.

[There's a 98.4% survival rate for melanoma caught early.](#) That survival rate drops to 22.5% in patients whose melanoma has metastasized.

[More people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year in the U.S. than all other cancers combined.](#) Basal cell carcinoma, a type of skin cancer that most often develops on areas of skin exposed to the sun, such as the face, is the most common form of skin cancer. Squamous cell carcinoma is the second-most common cancer, and it can be hard to treat if it spreads to the tissues, bones and lymph nodes.

I try to be better about the sun these days. Sunscreen is part of my daily routine and I wear a hat when I'm outdoors longer than a few minutes. Clothing with built-in UV protection is my new favorite thing. I watch for any spots that might be new or changing, and, most importantly, I visit Tulane Dermatology once a year for a thorough skin check.

May is [Skin Cancer Awareness Month](#), and [Tulane Dermatology](#) is offering free skin checks at their clinics in Covington and downtown New Orleans. At the Tulane Dermatology Multispecialty Clinic in Covington, free skin checks are available **May 2, 4 and 5 by appointment only**. Call **(985) 893-1291** to schedule an appointment for a free skin cancer screening.

No appointment is needed when Tulane Dermatology holds a free skin cancer screening at their downtown location **May 20**. Free screenings will be available from 1-3pm at the clinic located on the 5th floor of Tulane Medical Center.