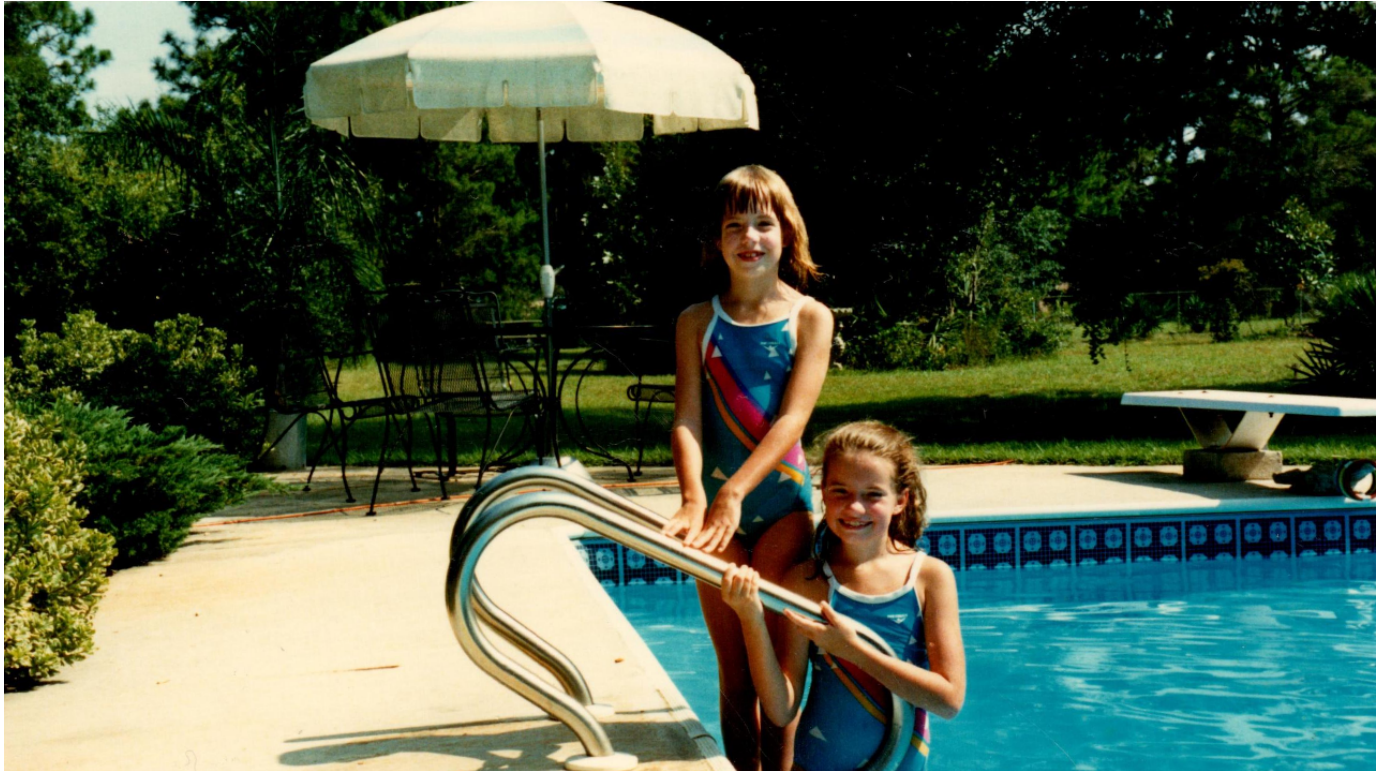


Skin cancer screenings save lives, including mine

Carolyn Scofield

scofield@tulane.edu

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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 Florida, 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 daily. 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 routine skin check 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 outdoors. 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 at least once a year for a skin check. I've had a few atypical moles removed in the last couple of years, so I'm now visiting my Tulane dermatologist every three to six months, but I'm happy to report I remain cancer-free.

[Tulane Dermatology](#) is offering free skin checks at the Tulane Doctors Lakeview clinic. The free skin cancer screening event will be held on **Tuesday, April 22, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.** The clinic is located at 7030 Canal Boulevard, Suite 100, New Orleans, LA 70124. No appointment is necessary to get a free screening.