

From Diagnosis to Detection: How Catching Cancer Early Saved Lainie Jones' Life—Seven Times

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May 23, 2025 By [Melanoma Research Alliance](#)

Lainie Jones, 41, a seven-time cancer survivor has learned to face her fears and overcome embarrassment when it comes to her health. She understands all too well that waiting, justifying, and overlooking things can have negative consequences. Lainie calls herself the “#theearlydetective” because asking questions and early detection is what has and will continue to save her life, time and time again.

As it turns out, Lainie's eyes-wide-open determination and self-awareness came the hard way. After her fourth cancer diagnosis (thyroid cancer), genetic testing revealed she has Li-Fraumeni syndrome (LFS), a hereditary condition which predisposes a person to multiple cancers. This diagnosis explained a lot, from her first cancer diagnosis as a baby to her subsequent diagnoses of breast and thyroid cancers, to melanoma, and now glioblastoma, for which she is currently undergoing treatment. Clinically speaking, however, this genetic information doesn't fix anything or offer any therapeutic options. What it does provide is a mandate for vigilance.

Of course, many cancers leave no calling card. But Lainie says knowing your body well, listening to it - because it will talk - and chasing down those little voices you hear and the questions you have can have lifesaving results. She also says, “Cancer does not deserve a stage. Don't shy away from pursuing professional input just because you're afraid of the answer you might get. Listen to your gut, stare it down, and educate yourself. That is your power that cancer can't have.”

Cancer Early Detection: Knowing What to Look For

Melanoma is the fifth most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States, but it is extremely [preventable](#) and highly treatable when [caught early](#).

Since surviving a dangerous melanoma that was caught on her back by a concerned friend, Lainie strongly advocates for:

- Conducting routine [self-exams](#) of your skin. Ask someone you trust to help check the areas you can't see. Don't forget to check your scalp, behind your ears, the palms of your hands and soles of your feet, nailbeds, etc. Make photographing your moles part of your routine.
- Getting annual [full body skin exams with a dermatologist](#). Ask about mole mapping. Your dermatologist can help assess your individual risk and how often you need skin exams.
- Getting regular ophthalmology appointments.
- Generously applying and reapplying [sunscreen](#), every single day. You have options, so use what works best for you.
- Getting comfortable with spray tans. There are many different options available, including organic.
- Wearing sun protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses.
- Protecting and teaching children about the need to protect their skin.
- Knowing your family history and talking about it. This may help connect some dots previously overlooked.
- Talking to your doctor about genetic testing and if it is an option for you.
- Covering up in the car and wearing SPF gloves if you like to get manicures. UV light strikes even indoors.
- Inspiring others around you to practice good sun safety habits.

While some rare subtypes of melanoma - like [mucosal](#), [acral](#), and [uveal](#) - are harder to catch, and even routine surveillance for [cutaneous melanoma](#) can't offer any guarantees, one thing is for sure: most melanomas are preventable. In fact, experts estimate that 90% of all melanoma diagnoses are caused by unprotected UV exposure. That's why Lainie stressed that refusing to change your habits can have irreversible outcomes.

Knowledge Brings Options

Lainie knows how fortunate she is despite multiple cancer diagnoses. Ignoring warning signs for any of them could have cut her story short. Instead, she counts herself as lucky and lives every day to help people thrive by taking control of their health. In fact, it's not uncommon for Lainie to approach complete strangers who look like they are burning or not practicing sun safety. She gently shares tidbits of her own story to influence them. She said, "You'd be surprised at how forward I am, but it might save a life. And generally, people are appreciative. At minimum, they

walk away with something to think about.” Early detection has saved her life. It empowers who she is, but does not define her.

This story was published by the [Melanoma Research Alliance](#) on May 12, 2025. It is republished with permission.

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<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/diagnosis-detection-catching-cancer-early-saved-lainie-jones-lifeseven-times>