

Overcoming Melanoma and Finding Purpose: Brittany Groover's Story

After two surgeries to remove a cancerous mole and then immunotherapy for a year, Brittany Groover advocates for melanoma prevention.

April 4, 2024 By [Melanoma Research Alliance](#)

By [Renee Orcione, MRA Digital Engagement & Communications Manager](#)

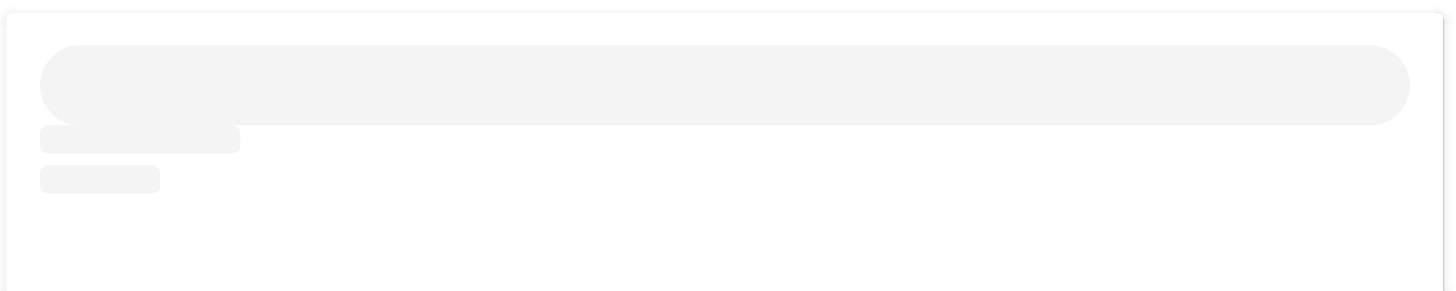
Growing up as a child in the 2000s and even later into her teens and early 20s, Brittany Groover wanted what many other young girls and women want: to be tan. Whether it was using tanning beds with her high school friends or laying out by the pool with her mom for hours at a time, getting a tan was a priority of hers. “I was so obsessed with being tan, especially in the summer,” recalled Brittany. “It felt like a full-time job.”

Brittanny remembers the comments she would get from family and friends — and even strangers — complimenting her tanned skin. Looking back, she had no idea the true harm she was causing by tanning. Many people don't realize that a tan is a sign of damaged, distressed skin.

Concerns Raised by a Changing Mole

It wasn't until she was 27 years old when Brittany would learn the true dangers of her cumulative UV exposure. In the years prior, she began visiting a dermatologist for [annual skin checks](#) and never had any issues. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, she missed her yearly appointment.

When Brittany was able to resume her skin check appointments again in 2021, her dermatologist noticed something concerning. A mole that was on Brittany's leg her entire life had grown. Brittany explained that the mole also became dry in texture, and it grew to about the size of a penny over the previous months.





[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Brittanny | skin cancer before 30 survivor (@beingbrittanny)

An existing mole changing in size and texture are signs of the [ABCDEs of melanoma detection](#). “It was quite obvious to my dermatologist that the mole was melanoma,” said Brittanny. “But even though I was getting my skin checked every year, I had no real idea what that meant.”

The following day, Brittanny returned for surgery to remove and officially test the growing mole. Just two days later, she received confirmation that the mole was melanoma.

A Second Surgery to Achieve Clear Margins

After her surgery, Brittanny met with a local oncologist for a PET scan to see if the melanoma had spread to any distant organs, which luckily it had not. However, a follow up call from the pathologist examining the removed mole delivered some unfortunate news.

The pathologist revealed that the surgery to remove Brittanny’s melanoma did not achieve clear margins. As a result, she had to go back for a [Wide Local Excision \(WLE\) surgery](#) which would be far more invasive and require a longer recovery. Due to the location of her melanoma and the fact that she already underwent surgery once, Brittanny’s second surgery required a skin graft and reconstruction.

“Healing from my Wide Local Excision was difficult,” said Brittanny. “But now, my scar is a conversation piece. When I’m out in public and people ask about it, I am happy to share my story.”

In addition to the WLE, Brittanny’s surgeon did a [Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy \(SLNB\)](#) of the lymph nodes in her groin. One lymph node came back positive for melanoma and was removed. At that time, and due to a lack of communication from her oncologist, Brittanny was under the impression

that her melanoma was Stage 2B. However, once melanoma has spread to the lymph nodes it is considered more advanced.

Immunotherapy and Experiencing Side Effects

In November after her WLE, Brittany began an immunotherapy regimen. She received [Keytruda](#) infusions every three weeks for a year, completing treatment in 2022 and has remained No Evidence of Disease (NED) ever since.

However, with her treatment came some challenging side effects. Brittany developed colitis and gastritis – conditions affecting areas of the digestive tract – both Immune Related Adverse Events (IrAEs) often faced by patients on immunotherapy. She expressed concern regarding her side effects to her oncologist but was not given many answers.

Brittanny then decided to [seek out a second opinion](#) with a gastroenterologist. “I was a healthy person before melanoma — this was my first time ever advocating for myself in a medical setting,” said Brittany. “Melanoma has taught me that even though doctors are educated, you still have to fight for yourself and advocate for what you think is right.”

Unfortunately, her side effects were left untreated for too long, and developed into pancreatitis over the Christmas holiday. “I’m alive and cancer free now, but it was a rollercoaster to get here,” she said. She still experiences stomach pains and needs to take medication for her pancreas for the rest of her life.

An Unexpected Turn in her Melanoma Journey

After getting her colitis and gastritis somewhat under control, Brittany decided to look for a new oncologist. With her new oncologist, she gets scans every six months to ensure her melanoma has not returned. She also sees her dermatologist every three months for skin checks. “Every time I go in for a scan or skin check, my stomach twists and turns,” Brittany shared.

“You don’t want to overthink your cancer into existence, but you also don’t want to be caught off guard.”

One day, while looking through her health records after finding a new oncologist, Brittany discovered something that shocked her: her official melanoma staging was changed from 2B to 3A after it was found in one of her lymph nodes. This was never communicated to her by her original oncologist, so throughout her entire melanoma journey, she believed she was at an earlier stage.

“Finding out that my melanoma was actually a more advanced stage was incredibly traumatic. It made me question my entire journey,” said Brittany. “But I was only 27 years old when I was first diagnosed. How was I to know the right questions to ask?”

Learning, Sharing, and Advocating for Melanoma Prevention and Detection

Since her diagnosis, Brittanny has learned all about melanoma [prevention and sun safety](#). As a mother to eight-year-old Jaxson, she makes sure that knowledge is passed down and reflected in his daily life. “When I was growing up, I was told that sunscreen was bad because it prevents a tan. Instead, I am raising my son to love sunscreen,” she said. She also regularly talks to her family members about the importance of visiting the dermatologist — especially on account of their light skin, red hair, and history of sun exposure.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Brittanny | skin cancer before 30 survivor (@beingbrittanny)

Brittanny has also been dedicated to publicly sharing her story and spreading awareness of the dangers of tanning and what it means to be diagnosed with melanoma. She always had a desire to do something with social media, and it was through her melanoma diagnosis that she found her purpose. She shares informative content about melanoma prevention, detection, treatment, research, and more on her [Instagram page @beingbrittanny](#).

Most recently, Brittanny joined [MRA's RARE Registry](#) for patients with acral, mucosal, and cutaneous melanoma — where patients can go to share their information, experiences, and disease history — all to help advance research and awareness.

“My advocacy has allowed me to heal, find and connect with other people going through a similar

journey, and learn so much about this disease,” Brittany explained. “Melanoma is a terrible thing, but it brought so much good and so many beautiful people into my life.”

[This post](#) was originally published March 21, 2024, by the [Melanoma Research Alliance](#). It is republished with permission.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/overcoming-melanoma-finding-purpose-brittanny-groovers-story>