

# How Cancer Has Affected Me

## by Joshua Hofmeister, 2009

Whenever somebody hears that I am a cancer survivor people are really surprised. Like the other day Allen told me I should try out for football and I said I would if I could. He always forgets I can't play but that's fine by me. It really does bug me I can't play lacrosse or football because those are my favorite sports. I can't play because I only have one kidney. One of my kidneys was infected with cancer when I was two years old. The doctor had to cut out the kidney when he cut out the cancer. If I get hit real hard where my one kidney is I could die.

Also I have a bunch of scars. My worst scar is from when they had to take my cancer and kidney out. The scar is between one quarter to one half around my stomach. I also have other scars from when they had to put tubes through my body. I can remember when my mom had to stick a tube up my nose and my nose would start to bleed really badly. The tube was supposed to feed me because I couldn't eat. The scars really don't bother me. But people annoy me sometimes with lots of questions about my scars. Then, yes I sort of hate it. Plus I have a scar that covered my entire body but that's another story. I'm thinking the only good thing about scars is that when somebody thinks that I'm lying about having cancer I have proof with me until I die.

Another bad thing about me having cancer is that I had to lose my hearing. I lost my hearing because one of the drugs to help me stay alive affected my hearing. Now I have to wear hearing-aids. They are devices that you put in your ears so that you can hear better. Sometimes I can't hear people and I have to ask them to repeat what they are saying a lot. It's worse at the pool because I can't get them wet and so I can't swim with the hearing aides and can't hear people. Having hearing aides is bad because lots of kids will make fun of you. I have my hair long so that nobody can see them. I can't wait until I'm 14 so that I can get rid of these hearing aides I have to wear outside my ears. Then I can get smaller ones that just go inside my ears. I can wear my hair short again because then the hearing aides will be less noticeable, and nobody can make fun of me.

Even though hearing aides are bad at times they can be good also. It is kind of cool because if somebody I don't like is talking to me I can ignore them by turning off my hearing aides! Most people can't do that. Even though cancer is a bad disease, there is a big reward if you survive. I get to live. I beat the cancer when I was two and a half years old. Since then I've been having fun. I play sports. I skateboard. And I spend time with my friends. We celebrate that I'm alive every year on my bone marrow transplant anniversary. I always go to Six Flags or Hershey Park with my family and friends.

My cancer really affects my mom a lot right now and there was a lot of pressure on her when I did have cancer. She made all of the decisions I couldn't make like if I should have surgery or not. Still my mom makes those decisions like if I should take a risk of playing sports and die or not. Now it's really hard for me and her to hear what's happening on the news with the kid who has cancer and he and his mother disappeared. It's really hard to hear about it when we know he can survive with treatment.

One important thing for me to do having survived cancer is to inspire people who are in treatment now. My grandmother's friend Mrs. Priscella had breast cancer and so I sent her a letter telling her that she can beat it. It is important to tell her that if I could beat it so could she. It inspires her to keep trying and do her best to survive too.

Having cancer has affected me in many ways. It is important to help people fight cancer because they can't do it on their own. I'm not the only survivor of cancer. One day I hope everybody can survive cancer.