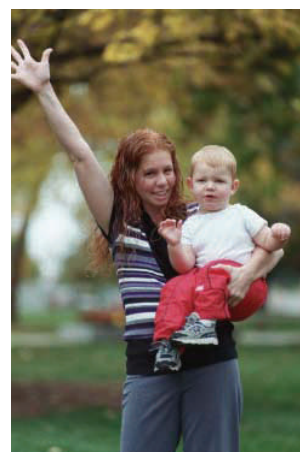


## Cancer Survivor Story Kristyn

Kristyn and Brendan were a young Kansas couple, recently married and anxious to start a family in 2007. Then Kristyn noticed a small, pimple-like cyst on the right side of her neck near her upper shoulder. At a July 4 get-together she wore her hair back and several family members said she should get it checked. She delayed a few weeks in getting the lump checked out by her doctor and by that time it was bigger and had changed colors. The following week she found out she was pregnant. Thrilled with the news of their upcoming baby, she learned the very next week she had metastatic melanoma in stage 4. She was by herself at her doctor's office when she got the news. Upset and crying, she immediately called her mother. As a healthy 25-year-old with no symptoms, she had thought it was just a non-suspicious lump.



She and her husband desperately wanted the baby and did not consider ending the pregnancy. At the same time they were devastated by the cancer diagnosis. They both wanted treatment that could help Kristyn continue her pregnancy and deal with the skin cancer. She was in her second trimester when she underwent two surgeries by an ear, nose and throat surgeon to remove lymph nodes in her neck and shoulder. After her son was born she elected to start radiation followed by chemotherapy. She continued to have X-rays and PET scans every two months. During her last surgery a year ago, no cancer cells were found.

Her physician believed the hormonal changes when she was first pregnant started the cyst growing and enabled her cancer to spread to the lymph nodes in her jaw and shoulder. Kristyn also fits the classic risk factors for skin cancer - fair skin, red hair and green eyes. In addition, there is a history of skin cancer on her Dad's side of the family. She noted that as a child she and her sister did spend summer days down at the pool, but she doesn't remember getting any bad burns.

Since her diagnosis she always covers her skin when outside, uses sunscreen at all times and wears sunglasses and a hat. She said that if anyone notices moles or skin changes, they should definitely get them checked out as she did. Her ordeal has been trying, but her healthy 16-month-old makes up for it. Her son Ayden is an "outside child" she says, so she knows she will have to watch him closely as he plays in the sun. And Kristyn and Brendan hope to be adding to their family soon because her doctor has told the couple that there is nothing that prevents them from having more healthy children.

KANSAS

comprehensive cancer control & prevention

[www.cancerkansas.org](http://www.cancerkansas.org)