

Burned Aging

I continue to struggle with externally looking so different and just so much older.

December 1, 2019 By [Megan-Claire Chase](#)

I remember wanting to look older when I was in college. I used to volunteer as a reading tutor at a public elementary school my senior year. One time when I was at the school, a teacher told me to get to class. She saw me as 6th grader and not a 21-year-old senior in college. The fact I had my hair in pigtails probably didn't help. I just recall being so upset that I was mistaken for someone so young. Now, I would give anything for that to happen again.

How come no one tells us how drastically cancer ages the body externally? Many of us internally feel older due to permanent side effects and other illnesses that were triggered by our cancer treatments and surgeries. I honestly never thought once about how much my face and neck would age.

Yes, I have always been on the vain side. Growing up in community theatre and ballet meant always looking in the mirror and looking the part. I always used to look years younger than my actual age, even in my early 30s. This rapid aging is tough to accept because no amount of creams or concealer can fully cover it up.

I first noticed the aging of my neck. It used to be so smooth. Now it looks like lines of multi-layered necklaces going down it. Quite shocking to see in the mirror. Why did I age in that area?

I honestly believe it has something to do with the radiation burns that went up the left side of my neck. I could see the beginning of lines then. I'll never understand why I burned so terribly in so many areas (neck, back, under arm) aside from my left breast. Radiation was just as painful and horrific as chemo. This picture below still makes me cringe. By the end of my 33 treatments, the layered lines had formed completely across and down my neck. Instantly looking 20 years older in that area.

It has taken a full three years for the dark panda circles under my eyes to fade enough to where I no longer need to wear a pound of concealer to attempt covering them up. As you can see below in the pictures from three years ago, nothing could fully cover them up back then. Aside from looking fatigued, I looked...haunted.

It's only recently that I no longer need a pound of makeup to cover the visibly aging skin. I just need half a pound instead! Seriously though, I continue to struggle with externally looking so different and just so much older. Then add medically induced menopause to the mix, and all hell has broken loose.

I don't know my skin post-cancer. It's dry and scaly in some areas now. The skin underneath my eyes has taken the biggest beating due to constant rubbing, new allergies to certain dye and contact dermatitis. I'm constantly trying different creams trying to find the right one to truly hydrate my skin.

Don't even get me started on my lips! They used to be smooth too. Ever since the chemo days, I continually struggle with peeling and cracked skin on each corner of my mouth. Fortunately, my dermatologist gave me some cream that I use on my lips and under my eyes to help with the dryness. I never know what will cause another skin flare up.

It just boggles my mind that all this aging happened without zero warning. The physical changes are just so jarring. To everyone else, I look super healthy. I treat my face like a canvas. It is amazing what makeup and good lighting can do. I miss my thick eyebrows. It's still strange to fill

them in with a brow pencil. Now I'm a master at it.

Once the makeup comes off, I look a little gray, burned and forever fatigued. My face and neck are constant reminders of the trauma which is why I can't ever NOT think about my cancer experience. It stares me in the face and plagues me daily.

Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

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