



## Meet Alec, Shriners Hospitals for Children Superstar

You may recognize 15-year-old Alec from the various commercials for Shriners Hospitals for Children® that have aired nationally. Alec, a patient of Shriners Hospitals for Children — Chicago, has become a popular television star, been interviewed on numerous national news and talk shows, and has captured the hearts of many with his adorable smile and charming personality.

### The Story Behind the Star

Alec lives in the suburbs of Chicago, and is quite the active teenager. From playing wheelchair softball and basketball, to assistant coaching tee-ball, he loves just about any sport. However, because he has Osteogenesis Imperfecta (OI), also known as brittle bone disease, Alec's approach to his favorite activities is a little different.

OI is a genetic bone disorder characterized by fragile bones that can frequently and easily break, which can make it hard for Alec to participate in sports. The underlying cause of OI is a lack of collagen – or abnormal collagen – in the bones that prevents them from absorbing appropriate minerals and developing correctly. As a patient of the Chicago Shriners Hospital, Alec receives intravenous (IV) infusions of pamidronate, a medication that slows down the process of bone resorption and improves bone mass. He also routinely visits the hospital for physical therapy.

Thanks to the outstanding care and innovative treatment Alec receives at the Chicago Shriners Hospital, his muscles are strengthening and his bones are breaking less often. This provides Alec with more opportunities to indulge in his passion for sports. Alec often participates in up to four hours of sports a day; his mother, Alma, works hard to ensure his homework and physical therapy are done, as well.

They manage to fit it all in. Alec has been coming to the Chicago Shriners Hospital for treatment since 2002. Since then, he has made great progress thanks to his customized treatment with our rehabilitation specialists.

Alec's mom is grateful for the excellent care her son has received. "If there is a number system to rate the hospital from one to 10, I'd give it a 16," she said. "They are always working with him and pushing him to work hard."

Currently, Alec is building more strength and increasing muscle development through aquatic therapy. The hospital's therapists work with Alec in a temperature-controlled hydrotherapy pool using aquatic treadmills and other equipment. Tapping into Alec's love for sports, his therapist has even incorporated water basketball into rehabilitation sessions.

The hospital also helped provide Alec with a customized, adaptive bicycle. While riding the bike is fun, it also helps strengthen his muscles, to help prevent future bone fractures.

According to Alma, these unique treatments, specifically designed for Alec, have allowed him to gain more independence. He continues to work on increasing his mobility.



### Shriners Hospitals for Children – Helping Dreams Become Reality

Thanks to the health care system's focus on improving the quality of life of patients and families, Alec has developed a level of confidence that has opened up a world of opportunities. Knowing that Alec hopes to be a sports broadcaster someday, the hospital staff has done what it can to encourage faith in that dream.

During the NFL Draft weeks in 2015 and 2016, patients of the Chicago Shriners Hospital had the chance to experience the excitement of the draft first-hand when players visited during a Prospect Community Visit. As a special surprise, Alec was given the opportunity to conduct interviews with NFL Draft prospects, which were featured on the NFL website.

Alec has also appeared in national commercials for Shriners Hospitals for Children, representing the many patients whose lives have been changed forever by the health care system. Alec is a great voice for Shriners Hospitals for Children, and continues to share his appreciation everywhere he goes.

"Without Shriners Hospitals for Children, I wouldn't be able to dream as big as I do," said Alec. "I know anything is possible because the staff remind me all the time that I can do whatever I set my mind to. I live a full life because of Shriners Hospitals."

Alec is just one of the more than 1.3 million children who have benefited from the hope and healing found at Shriners Hospitals for Children.



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for Children®

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