



Zoë's story: Staying healthy while competing

Description

A competitive swimmer praises Leucan for helping her live a more normal life

Zoë is a young thirteen-year-old girl with a soft voice – yet a very determined personality. She is a competitive swimmer. And according to her, a very competitive swimmer. She has been competing since the age of six and has trained with a swim club in Pointe-Claire. Her rigour and serious training helped her win, five years later, a medal at the provincial championships. What's more, thanks to her high energy and can-do attitude, she also is involved in diving, synchronized swimming and water polo. Zoë simply loves water.





However, in January 2017, her health started to waver. She started having very strong headaches and began suffering from unbelievable pain in her legs and arms. She had difficulty sleeping. Her family thought she had mononucleosis. Her mother, Véronique, who works in the healthcare sector, encouraged Zoë to go to the hospital and have more in-depth tests conducted.

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It was May 30. The blood tests came back with a devastating result: Zoë had acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a type of cancer that evolves in the blood's stem cells. Incomprehension. Disbelief. Shock. How could Zoë be so sick when she had a healthy and active lifestyle, and ate well? Just before she was diagnosed, she was able to swim seven kilometres. Zoë was discouraged – and mad for having to stop training for several months. But she was determined to overcome this challenge.

Leucan brings smiles to people's faces



Zoë had to put her life on hold. The day after her diagnosis, she started chemotherapy. Doctors said she had to undergo approximately two and a half years of treatment. “Having been diagnosed at her age represented a bigger risk than if she had been ten years old. But the prognosis was good”, her mother said with confidence.

During her multiple stays at the hospital, Zoë was supported by Leucan. She mentioned that she loved the breakfasts and activities that were organized while she waited for her treatment, and the massage therapy sessions

offered to patients to help relieve pain and their families to alleviate stress. Leucan offered a wig. Despite feeling uncomfortable at first, she did not wear it because she didn't want to hide that she was losing her hair. Both mother and daughter still speak of the amazing hockey night which was organized by Leucan for families. They were treated to a one-of-a-kind experience in a luxury suite at the Bell Centre. They were able to talk with players from the Montréal Canadiens too. Everyone had big grins on their faces and had a lot of fun!

“Leucan volunteers helped us to have a more normal life,” explained Zoë’s mother. “We were able to overcome all these challenges thanks to them. Without Leucan, we would not have known what to do.”



Today and the future

The most difficult period of Zoë’s treatments is now over. She still has regular follow-ups at the hospital. She has gone back to school at Collège Sainte-Anne and will soon be finishing Secondary 2 as planned. Much to Zoë’s delight, she can now train again, albeit at a slower pace: two hours, four times a week. When she will be back to full-time training, she will be working out seven times a week. Zoë is a very determined and ambitious girl: she dreams of one day competing in the Olympics. Why not? When asked about her future career options, Zoë said she was thinking about pursuing a degree in the healthcare sector, like her mother. She learned so much about cancer, which piqued her interest.

What message would Zoë like to offer children that have cancer? “Concentrate on the positive things because if not, everything takes more time than we hope for.”



'Zoë is a very determined and ambitious girl: she dreams of one day competing in the Olympics. Why not?'

Leucan's Shaved Head Challenge at Alexis Nihon

Alexis Nihon, a property owned and managed by **Cominar Real Estate Investment Trust**, will host the very first head-shaving activity on **Thursday, April 19 between 12 pm and 3 pm** at the Metro level. All funds raised will help **Leucan** continue to conduct pediatric cancer research and support families. Each year, Leucan helps 300 families in Québec to access support and respite services.

You can register for the **Shaved Head Challenge** or make a donation by visiting tetesrasees.com or on-site on the day of the activity.

Images: courtesy of Leucan

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