

Lipedema Canada /Lipœdème Canada

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Subject: Standardized Coverage for Medical-Grade Compression Garments for Lipedema Patients

Dear Insurance Provider:

Lipedema Canada / Lipoedème Canada writes this letter in support of the lipedema community in Canada, advocating for standardized coverage of **flat-knit, custom-measured, full pantyhose compression garments** for individuals diagnosed with lipedema. Lipedema is a **chronic, progressive fat disorder** affecting up to 11% of women worldwide, characterized by disproportionate fat accumulation primarily in the limbs, resulting in **pain, mobility impairments, and reduced quality of life** (*Herbst et al., 2021; Faerber et al., 2024*). As evidenced in national and international medical guidelines, compression therapy is an **essential component** of disease management (*S2K German Guidelines, 2024; U.S. Standard of Care, 2021; Reich-Schupke et al., 2017; Bauer et al., 2019*).

Medical Necessity of Compression for Lipedema

Unlike lymphedema or venous insufficiency, lipedema is a distinct disease entity requiring **disease-specific compression therapy** (Faerber et al., 2024). The **S2K German Guidelines** and the **United States Standard of Care for Lipedema** both highlight the necessity of compression therapy in managing pain, preventing disease progression, and improving patient mobility (*Herbst et al., 2021*).

Key clinical considerations include:

- **Bilateral limb involvement:** Lipedema affects both limbs, necessitating full-leg or full-arm compression coverage.

- **Tissue structure abnormalities:** Significant variations in limb shape require **flat-knit, custom-measured garments** for most patients, as off-the-shelf options are often ineffective (Faerber et al., 2024).
- **Compression strength requirements:** Ranging from **Class I (15-20 mmHg) to Class III (40-60 mmHg)**, tailored to individual patient needs, ensuring that milder compression options are available for early-stage management and those with higher sensitivity (*S2K German Guidelines, 2024*).
- **Long-term daily use:** Compression therapy is recommended **daily and long term** to manage symptoms and prevent progression (*Herbst et al., 2021*).

Financial Barriers and Insurance Coverage Gaps

A **2024 national survey conducted by Lipedema Canada** assessed the **average costs** of flat-knit, custom compression garments across the country:

- **National average per pair: \$460 CAD**
- **Provincial cost variance:**
 - **Least expensive province:** New Brunswick (**\$300 CAD per pair**)
 - **Most expensive province:** Ontario (**\$695 CAD per pair**)

Given that lipedema patients require multiple pairs annually, this financial burden significantly limits access to this **medically necessary treatment**. In many cases, **insurance coverage for compression is insufficient**, covering only a fraction of the costs or denying custom-measured garments entirely (*Lipedema Canada, 2024*).

Why Insurance Providers Should Standardize Coverage

As a leading insurance provider, your organization has the opportunity to **improve patient outcomes and reduce long-term healthcare costs** by implementing standardized coverage for **flat-knit, custom-measured compression garments**. The benefits include:

- **Preventative care cost savings:** Compression therapy **reduces the need for surgical interventions**, physiotherapy, and disability claims (*Faerber et al., 2024; Reich-Schupke et al., 2017; Beltran & Herbst, 2017*).
- **Improved mobility and workforce participation:** Effective compression management **reduces pain and maintains mobility**, allowing patients to remain active in the workforce longer (*Herbst et al., 2021; Faerber et al., 2024; Lipedema Canada, 2024*).

- **Alignment with global healthcare standards:** Recognizing compression therapy as a **first-line treatment** for lipedema ensures **equity in patient care** and brings Canada in line with international best practices (*S2K German Guidelines, 2024; U.S. Standard of Care, 2021; Reich-Schupke et al., 2017; Bauer et al., 2019; Lipedema Canada, 2024*).

Recommendation

We strongly urge your company to **revise its policy framework** to reflect the **medical necessity of compression therapy for lipedema** by:

1. **Providing full coverage for flat-knit, custom-measured compression garments**, including full pantyhose styles.
2. **Covering compression garments at a rate that reflects national pricing averages**, ensuring financial accessibility.
3. **Reducing barriers for claim approvals**, recognizing lipedema as a distinct medical condition with unique therapeutic needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration in addressing this critical healthcare coverage gap. We look forward to discussing how we can work together to ensure equitable access to essential medical compression therapy for lipedema patients across Canada.

Sincerely,

Lipedema Canada / Lipoedème Canada

References

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