PATIENT SUCCESS STORY

My Journey: From Pain and Confusion to Purpose and Advocacy, Tanya's Success Story

NAME
TANYA

HEIGHT
5FT 4IN

WEIGHT
193 LBS

CONDITION
LIPEDEMA

TELL US YOUR STORY

> *"For years, I blamed myself for not doing enough – not realizing my body was fighting something I didn't even know existed."*

My name is Tanya, and for most of my life, I thought my body was just different. I wasn't "skinny" growing up, but I was athletic and active. As I got older, my legs began to ache and swell. My knees seemed to disappear, my lower body felt heavy, and no matter how hard I tried – dieting, exercising, fasting – nothing worked. The pain worsened, and I couldn't understand why.

I chalked it up to getting older, being busy, or just having bad genetics. But deep down, I knew something wasn't right.

When Everything Finally Made Sense

One day, I came across a social media video by a woman describing **lipedema**, and every word stopped me in my tracks. She mentioned pain, swelling, legs that bruise easily, and a shape that doesn't change no matter how much you diet or exercise. I thought, ***"That's me."***

I took the information to my doctor, explained my symptoms, and for the first time, someone listened. She said, "Based on what you're telling me, I believe you do have lipedema." That moment was a mix of relief and fear – relief that there was finally a name for what I'd been dealing with, and fear of what it meant for my future.

My journey didn't end there. I went through more evaluations, and eventually, it was confirmed that I also have venous insufficiency, which often accompanies lipedema. I started working with specialists in manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) and began exploring conservative therapies to manage my condition.

"For the first time in my life, I felt seen. My pain had a name – and a plan."

Finding What Works for Me

Over time, I built a toolbox of ways to manage my symptoms – and one of the most effective has been the **AIROS 8P pneumatic compression system**. I use the **truncal garments** several times a week.

I work from home, which means a lot of sitting, and before using the pump, my legs would swell by the end of the day. Now, when I use the AIROS system consistently, that swelling stays under control. If I know I'm going to be on my feet for long hours – like at events or during travel – I make sure to bring it with me.

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Recently, I learned that my efforts are truly paying off – my latest measurements show I’m down 3⊠ inches in my right leg and 5⊠ inches in the last couple months. Seeing those tangible results reminds me that consistency matters and that the right tools make a real difference.

Along with compression, I use tools like a rebounder, vibration plate, and red light therapy. Living in Florida, wearing compression garments every day can be uncomfortable, so my pump has become my lifeline to manage swelling and pain.

This isn’t just about looking or feeling better – it’s about staying functional, confident, and in control.

The Family Connection

My journey also helped me recognize what my mom had been silently dealing with for years. She’s 71, and for most of her life, she thought her swelling and heaviness were just from “getting older.” After I learned about lipedema, I looked at her legs one day and thought, *“She has this too.”*

My mom has lymphedema and likely late-stage lipedema. She has an older pneumatic compression pump she jokingly calls “the octopus” because of all its hoses. Watching her try to use it breaks my heart – it’s bulky, awkward, and difficult for her to manage safely.

Seeing her struggle reminded me how important accessibility and comfort are for long-term treatment. It’s not enough to just have a pump – it has to be something people can actually use. That’s why I’m such a believer in the AIROS system. It’s simple, comfortable, and helps me stay consistent. And I want my mom – and others like her – to experience that same ease and relief.

A Crown with a Cause

My medical journey led to something unexpected: a new purpose. During the pandemic, while my husband was deployed, I decided to try something totally outside my comfort zone – I entered a plus-size pageant. I told myself I’d just have fun with it, and if I didn’t win, no one would know. But to my surprise, I won.

That experience changed me. Pageantry became a way to rebuild confidence and use my voice. Over the years, I’ve realized that my platform could be about more than appearances – it could be about advocacy.

Through pageantry, I now share my story of living with lipedema and venous insufficiency. I speak openly about how long it took to get diagnosed, how misunderstood this condition still is, and how tools like compression therapy have helped me reclaim my quality of life.

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I want other women – especially young girls – to recognize the early signs, ask questions, and advocate for themselves. Because if I had known what lipedema was when I was younger, I could have started treatment decades earlier.

"If my story helps even one woman realize she's not lazy, not broken, and not alone – then it's worth every bit of vulnerability."

Looking Ahead

As I prepare for my next competition, I'm carrying more than a gown and a crown – I'm carrying a message. A message of awareness, empowerment, and kindness.

This condition may be part of my life, but it doesn't define me. I've learned that strength isn't about perfection – it's about persistence. And through my platform, I'm determined to shine a light on a condition that deserves recognition and compassion.

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