



Anthem Blue Cross  
Grievances and Appeals  
P.O. Box 105568  
Atlanta, GA 30348-5568

Mary Berns  
Member ID: UBC340A23550  
DOB: 09/06/1958  
Reference #: UM57691598

March 29, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this as Miss Mary Berns' First Level Gap Exception Appeal for Lipedema Reduction Surgery to be done with Dr. Jaime Schwartz and TLC Surgical Center at the in-network level. We have received a denial from Anthem Blue Cross, and per the denial letter it states the plan has providers with the same skills who are able to care for her.

From our experience, there are no provider and standing ambulatory surgical centers who treat lipedema that are in-network with any insurance companies. While Miss Berns has the flexibility to seek liposuction from any in-network provider, we'd like to point out this is not standard liposuction.

It would be in Miss Berns' best interest to begin her journey with a provider and staff who are familiar with this disease. If Miss Berns' is compelled to seek treatment from another provider who lacks real knowledge in treating this disease, that could potentially cause long-term damage and necessitate further intervention for everyone involved.

Jaime Schwartz, MD is a medical practice specializing in researching, treating, and diagnosing Lipedema. TLC Surgical Center has created the most advanced surgical treatment available to relieve pain. Founder of Total Lipedema Care in Beverly Hills, California. Dr. Schwartz has dedicated part of his private practice to helping women suffering from this disease. He has spent countless hours getting the staff and proper equipment at TLC Surgical Center so the patients can have the best outcome.

As lipedema worsens, patients will invariably begin to develop tender nodules, colloquially referred to as "lipedema pearls," which stubbornly attach to the underlying connective tissue. When left untreated, these nodules can grow as large as golf balls, causing unbearable pain and limited mobility. Dr. Jaime Schwartz of Total Lipedema Care has ***developed and patented a technique*** called Manual Lipedema Extraction (MLE) in which tissue massage is used to remove large painful nodules from the patient. This spares delicate blood vessels and lymphatic systems. Dr. Schwartz contributes his advanced approach to the ongoing research of the disorder.



Places like TLC Surgical Center are centered around giving women surgical options, treatment plans, and additional avenues for support to have a better quality of life while living with this disease. Because Anthem does not offer an in-network status provider and ambulatory surgical center that can perform these types of procedures, this leaves a gap in the patients care.

See: <https://totallipedemacare.com/blog/lipedema-treatment-manual-lipedema-extraction/>

In light of this, Miss Berns is asking that you please reconsider and allow Dr. Jaime Schwartz and TLC Surgical Center at in network-level. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office 310-882- 5454.

Best regards,  
Lester Dela Cruz  
Total Lipedema Care  
Jaime Schwartz, MD  
Board Certified Plastic Surgeon  
Associate Clinical Professor of Surgery – USC Keck School of Medicine  
Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery



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## EFFECTIVENESS OF LIPEDEMA SURGERY

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There are approximately 1,000 lipedema surgeries performed every year in the United States. They are essential to improving function and reducing pain for patients suffering from this disease.

An August 2014 review of the forty-seven publications from 1982 to 2014, found agreement of the forty-seven publications from 1982 to 2014, found agreement that lipectomy is an applicable and effective treatment for chronic medical conditions such as lipedema. *Liposuction: A Surgical Tool to Improve the Quality of Life after Morbid Medical Conditions: Review of Literature*, Elkhatib HA 2014 Anaplastology 3:133. Lipectomy for lipedema has a definite positive and long-lasting effect. *Liposuction is an Effective Treatment for Lipedema-Results of a Study with 25 Patients*, Rapprich, Stefan, MD et al, Journal of the German Soc of Derm: Vol 9, (2012); p 33-40. (the majority of patients no longer require prolonged further therapy. Reduction of pain and drastic improvement in the patient's quality of life is noted in all patients.)

Liposuction has ceased to define a specific procedure and became synonymous with a surgical technique or tool the same as the surgical knife, laser, electrocautery, suture material, or even wound-dressing products. *Functional and Therapeutic Indications of Liposuction: Personal Experience and Review of the Literature*, Bishara Atiyeh 2015 Annals of Plastic Surgery 75(2). Liposuction results in fewer complications such as hematoma formation, skin necrosis, wound infection, and dehiscence with delayed healing and prolonged hospital stay. *Aesthetic or Functional Indications for Liposuction*, Michel Costagliola, MD et al, *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, Volume 33, Issue 8, November 2013, Pages 1212–1213. In other words, liposuction is to surgical lipectomy what endoscopic cholecystectomy is to open surgical cholecystectomy.

Lipedema surgery decreases the mechanical stress on lymphatic vessels sufficiently to allow for the cessation of compression garment use beyond the initial postoperative period. *Long-term Outcome After Surgical Treatment of Lipedema*, Anne Warren Peled, MD, et al, Annals of Plastic Surgery Volume 68, Number 3, March 2012.

The international expert in lipedema, Dr. Josef Stutz, has studied the effects on the health of his patients for many years. The effects in a patient's body from the unusual gait from lipedema fat storage around the knees causes multiple joint complications. Stutz concluded that lipectomy is the only treatment that can remove the mechanical impediment to normal gait and prevent joint deterioration. *Liposuction of Lipedema for Prevention of Later Joint Complications*; Stutz, Josef MD, Vasomed, Vol 23 (2011).

Wollina and colleagues reported on 111 patients mostly with advanced lipedema treated by this technique in our center between 2007 and 2018. The median pain level before treatment was 7.8 and 2.2 at the end of the treatment. An improvement of mobility could be achieved in all patients. Bruising was also reduced. Serious adverse events were observed in 1.2% of procedures, the infection rate was 0% and the bleeding rate was 0.3%. Liposuction is an effective treatment for painful lipedema. *Dermatol Ther.* 2019 Mar; 32(2) In another study of 209 patients, quality of life increased significantly after surgery with a reduction of pain and swelling and decreased tendency to easy bruising. Bauer and colleagues, *New Insights on Lipedema: The Enigmatic Disease of the Peripheral Fat*. *Plast. Reconstr Surg.* 2019 Dec. 144(6)

Thus, lipedema surgery is safe, effective, and the standard of care for many, many years. Indeed, the International Consensus Conference on Lipedema issued conclusions that although lipedema has been underdiagnosed in places like the United States, multiple studies from Germany have reported long-term benefits for as long as eight years after lipedema surgery. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3135643> 3