

# Plant-based inspiration

## A lymphedema diagnosis that led to entrepreneurial success

By Amy Beaith

Life with lymphedema is hard. It can feel like an uphill battle sometimes and it's a condition that you need to work at everyday. I'm sharing my story of how I have learned to live well and thrive with lymphedema in the hope that it will help you too.

I'm a mom of 2 bright little girls, Iris (3 1/2 years) and Sage (2 years), and have bilateral primary lymphedema that I developed first in my left leg at age 5 and then in my right leg at age 30. I maintain my lymphedema with an intensive skincare routine and regular exercise. Deep water aquafit, rebounding, and cycling are my favourites! I also go for regular manual lymphatic drainage, wear compression night and day, and in the last 2 years, I adopted a vegan and gluten-free diet, which helped my swelling a great deal. To help with the emotional aspects, I've found a great group of people on Instagram and highly recommend reaching out to others on that social media platform. I've learned many tips and tricks and am grateful to find other lymphedema "thrivers" who can share in the ups and downs of a lymphie life.

I've always loved plants and been drawn to them! I grew up foraging for berries, apples, etc. in our woods on our acreage in Ontario, and then worked at greenhouses, farms, and parks as a young adult. This plant passion started to take root in my late 20s when I

began making my own plant-based skincare products that would help me manage my lymphedema better. I was unhappy with the green choices that were out there, and 15 years ago, there weren't many to be found. At the time, I was still working as a Health Librarian and this was my creative outlet. After many years of creating and selling my products at craft shows, I took a great big leap and decided to turn my hobby into my passion. I founded a company called PLANTiful—detoxifying skincare. I took courses and channeled my strong health information research skills into my business to create herbal-infused, science-based products that didn't just smell great, but worked!



Having my own business has been wonderful but also can be stressful and sometimes creates long hours, which can negatively affect my lymphedema. Overall, it has been helpful for my condition in that I can set my own hours, build in swims, rebounding or elevation breaks when it suits me.

It has also allowed me to take care of my two girls and watch them grow up, which has been a gift in itself. They also get to learn a lot about plants now too, helping me forage for flowers and herbs around the neighbourhood and in our garden.

Today, I'm motivated to thrive with my

lymphedema by my business I've created and my children. I want to show them that you can live well with this condition and go after something you are passionate about. Finding a passion helped me accept my lymphedema better and use it as a driver for my passion.

Find something that motivates you, brings you joy everyday. It might take time and it might not be obvious, but keep looking. Don't give up!!

### Skincare tips

When you have lymphedema, your immune system and detoxifying system is much slower and doesn't function as well as others, which is why we are prone to infections, etc. The important thing to think about when it comes to skincare is that our skin is our biggest organ and it only takes 30 seconds for something that you put on your skin to reach your bloodstream. Amazing right? Whatever you choose to put on your skin should be as toxin-free as possible to reduce the stress on your lymphatic system!

My suggestions for the top 5 categories where you should choose a product that is all natural (either because they cover a large surface area on your body or their use is in close proximity to lymph node areas) are: toothpaste, deodorant, moisturizers, soap and zinc-oxide sunscreen.

If you aren't sure which products might be toxin-free or a good choice to switch to, there are some great resources out there such as the Canadian 'Think Dirty' organization and the Environmental Working Group Skin Deep Database in the USA. Both these resources cover the larger skincare brands in Canada and the US and are helpful tools to have with you when shopping or browsing through your bathroom. [LP](#)



**Amy Beaith**, lives with primary bilateral lymphedema in both legs in Edmonton, Alberta. She is the founder of PLANTiful apothecary—a plant-loving, detoxifying skincare company. To learn more about PLANTiful go to [www.plantiful.ca](http://www.plantiful.ca), find me on Instagram: @livPLANTiful and sharing my lymphedema story @nourishedlymph

## Hints and Tips

### Compression fitting

Try to be at your “best measurement” before you get fitted for a new garment. This might mean having the garment fitter measure your limb in the morning instead of late afternoon, when you may be more swollen. Depending on your situation, it might also mean that you should use night compression bandaging or devices, or even 24-hour self-bandaging, for a few days before being measured. Get advice from your lymphedema therapist. Being measured when you are at “your best” will help maintain your limb volume. You may want to collect a small “wardrobe” of self-management tools and solutions.

Anna Towers, Montreal, Quebec



### Beachwear

With proper precaution, those living with leg lymphedema can still enjoy relaxing walks on the beach. Wear a compression garment, covered by a long cover-up or wide and lightweight palazzo pants to shield the sun, and appropriate footwear to protect your feet from sharp shells, insect bites and other potential hazards that could result in breaks to the skin.

Anna Kennedy, Toronto, Ontario



### Carry-on

Keep the compression garments you plan to take with you on a trip, close to you (in your purse or carry-on). That way it will be easier to find these items if needed, for example, to provide additional reduction in swelling or if needed as a replacement due to the slight soiling of one garment.

Jan Hasak, Chico, California



### Send us your hints and tips

Why not make it easier for those living with lymphedema by sharing your practical day-to-day living tips with us? We invite patients, caregivers and health professionals to send in your suggestions and photos to [pathways@canadalymph.ca](mailto:pathways@canadalymph.ca).



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