

Lipoma

What is a lipoma?

A lipoma is a soft fatty lump. It is a benign (noncancerous) growth made up from fat cells that clump together. A lipoma can occur in any part of the body where there are fat cells. Lipomas typically feel soft and can be felt to move slightly under your skin when you press on them.



Lipomas under the skin are the most common. It often form in the fatty tissue under the skin. These are also the most noticeable ones as they look and feel like soft, dome-shaped lumps under the skin. They vary in size from pea size to several centimetres in diameter. The most common sites where lipomas develop are on the shoulders, the chest and the back, but other areas of the skin can develop a lipoma.

Other parts of the body:

Lipomas can less commonly form inside the body too. However, in most of these cases you will not be aware that you have a lipoma as you cannot see them and they rarely cause any problems.

Who gets lipomas and how common are they?

Anyone can develop a lipoma at any age. Lipomas are common - about 1 in 100 people develop one or more lipomas. Some people inherit a tendency to develop lipomas and may have several on different parts of the body. Sometimes as many as 20 or more develop. However, it is more common to develop just one or two.

Lipomas can occur in people who are normal weight as well as people who are overweight.

What are the symptoms of a lipoma and are they harmful?

In themselves, lipomas are not serious and most lipomas cause no symptoms or problems. They grow very slowly. Sometimes a lipoma under the skin can be unsightly if it grows to be several centimetres across. Rarely, a lipoma may press on another structure and cause problems. For example, if one presses on a nerve it may cause pain. Also, rarely, a lipoma may develop in the gut wall and cause problems such as pain or a blockage of the gut.

Note: lipomas are always benign. There is no scientific evidence that a lipoma increases the risk of developing a cancer in the future.

A lipoma is a benign (noncancerous) fatty lump that usually causes no symptoms or problems. Most lipomas are small and are best left alone. However, a lipoma that develops under the skin can sometimes look unsightly. If required, it can be removed by a simple operation.

Do I need any treatment for a lipoma?

Usually not. If you are not bothered by a lipoma that develops, then it is best just to leave it alone. However, some people want lipomas that are unsightly to be removed for cosmetic reasons. For example, if they occur on your face. Occasionally, a lipoma needs to be removed if it is causing symptoms such as pressure symptoms. It is recommended that lipomas larger than 5cm, rapid growing and those with atypical appearance be removed surgically.

Sometimes a lipoma inside the body is removed to look at under the microscope to make sure the growth that had been detected is a lipoma and not something more serious.

For a lipoma that forms under the skin, usually it can be removed by a simple minor operation. The wound is then stitched up. A fine scar will be left. The wound are usually kept closed for 5 to 7 days. Only remove the dressing if soiled or wet. If non absorbable stitches are used or clips they should be removed after 10 to 14 days.



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