

Lipoma

Overview

A lipoma is a slow-growing, fatty lump that's most often situated between your skin and the underlying muscle layer. A lipoma, which feels doughy and usually isn't tender, moves readily with slight finger pressure. Lipomas are usually detected in middle age. Some people have more than one lipoma.

A lipoma isn't cancer and usually is harmless. Treatment generally isn't necessary, but if the lipoma bothers you, is painful or is growing, you may want to have it removed.

Symptoms

Lipomas can occur anywhere in the body. They are typically:

- **Situated just under the skin.** They commonly occur in the neck, shoulders, back, abdomen, arms and thighs.
- **Soft and doughy to the touch.** They also move easily with slight finger pressure.
- **Generally small.** Lipomas are typically less than 2 inches (5 centimeters) in diameter, but they can grow.
- **Sometimes painful.** Lipomas can be painful if they grow and press on nearby nerves or if they contain many blood vessels.

When to see a doctor

A lipoma is rarely a serious medical condition. But if you notice a lump or swelling anywhere on your body, have it checked by your doctor.

Causes

The cause of lipomas isn't fully understood. They tend to run in families, so genetic factors likely play a role in their development.

Risk factors

Several factors may increase your risk of developing a lipoma, including:

- **Being between 40 and 60 years old.** Although lipomas can occur at any age, they're most common in this age group.
- **Genetics.** Lipomas tend to run in families.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

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