

Fatty Lumps and Lipomas in Dogs

Discovering a lump under your dog's skin can be alarming, but many lumps are not serious. It's important to consult your vet, especially if the lump is growing, sore, or bleeding. Many of these lumps are lipomas, which are common fatty tumours in dogs.

What is a Lipoma?



- **Definition:** A lipoma is a harmless lump that originates from fat cells stored in the tissues around the body.
- **Characteristics:**
 - **Pain Level:** Generally not painful.
 - **Growth:** They can grow large, sometimes to the size of your dog's head.
 - **Weight Impact:** Overweight dogs tend to develop larger lipomas, but weight loss can reduce their size.

Are Fatty Lumps or Lipomas Cancerous?



- **Benign Nature:** Lipomas are benign, meaning they are not cancerous and do not spread like malignant tumours.
- **Multiple Lumps:** Some dogs, especially those that are overweight, may develop multiple lipomas.
- **Infiltrative Lipomas:** Rarely, lipomas can penetrate other tissues, such as muscle.
- **Rare Malignancy:** In very rare cases, a lipoma can become malignant, known as a liposarcoma, but this is uncommon.

What to Do if You Find a Lump on Your Dog

1. **Visit the Vet:** Schedule an appointment as soon as possible. While a lipoma is likely harmless, it's crucial to rule out serious conditions.
2. **Observe Symptoms:** Take note of any pain when touching the lump, as well as any changes in appetite or toilet habits.

Diagnosing Fatty Lumps or Lipomas

- **Veterinary Examination:** Your vet may suspect a lipoma based on its distinct feel and texture.
- **Aspirate or Biopsy:** They may perform an aspiration (removing cells with a needle) or a biopsy to confirm the diagnosis and rule out cancer.



Should Lipomas Be Removed?

- **Health Impact:** Many lipomas do not affect overall health and are removed mainly for cosmetic reasons.

- **Surgical Need:** If a lipoma grows large enough to cause discomfort or restrict movement, surgical removal may be necessary. This procedure is typically straightforward and performed under general anaesthesia.

Breeds Prone to Lipomas

While any breed can develop lipomas, they are more common in:

- **Labradors**
- **Shetland Sheepdogs**
- **Dachshunds**
- **Cocker Spaniels**
- **Weimaraners**
- **Miniature Schnauzers**
- **Doberman Pinschers**

Other risk factors include:

- **Hypothyroidism**
- **Obesity**
- **Age:** Older dogs are more susceptible.

Signs of Pain in Dogs

If your dog has a lipoma, watch for signs that may suggest pain:

- **Behaviour Changes:** Withdrawal or aggression
- **Loss of Appetite:** Refusal to eat
- **Reluctance to Move:** Hesitance to walk or play
- **Restlessness:** Difficulty finding a comfortable position
- **Lack of Interest:** In activities they usually enjoy



Important: An occasional tail wag does not necessarily indicate that your dog is pain-free. If painkillers are necessary, only use those prescribed by a veterinarian.

Conclusion

Finding a lump on your dog can be concerning, but many turn out to be harmless lipomas. Always consult your vet to ensure your pet's health and well-being. Regular check-ups can help monitor any changes in lumps and your dog's overall condition.