

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

Dear Dr. Schmidt,
 What is a lipoma? Thank you, Kelli
 Dear Kelli,

A lipoma is a benign tumor made up of fat cells. These benign tumors do not invade other tissues or spread in a destructive way. Some people call them fatty tumors, or fatty cysts (even though they technically are not a cyst). Lipomas form when fat cells change their structure and grow at a faster rate than regular fat cells, thus accumulating fat and forming a lump. Some of these lumps remain small, but some can grow to be very large. Also, some pets can develop multiple lipomas. And like most tumors, no one really knows why they form in the first place. As a general rule, most do not bother the pet and can be left alone. Others can be bothersome to the pet, or in unsightly places and need to be surgically removed. That will be up to you and your veterinarian to determine if surgery is necessary or not. But first of all, you and your veterinarian will want to make sure that the lump is really a lipoma, and not some other destructive, malignant tumor. They can do a quick test right in the exam room by aspirating some of the material with a small needle, placing it on a slide, and studying it under the microscope. In very rare instances, even lipomas can become malignant. A biopsy can tell for sure. So Kelli, if a dog (and only very occasionally a cat) develops a lump, have it checked out by your vet to make sure it is only a lipoma. Don't take a chance and guess that it is . . . that's when you can get into trouble. Hope this helps you out today.

Sincerely, Dr. Doug



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