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Lipomas

What are lipomas?

Lipomas are benign, slow-growing tumors that come from fat cells. They are not cancer. They are usually round, moveable, flattened lumps under the skin. They feel soft and doughy or rubbery. Lipomas usually grow in the neck, shoulders, back, or arms. They can occur at any age, but they often appear when you're between 40 and 60 years of age. Sometimes they run in families. Sometimes they are caused by an injury. Most lipomas do not hurt unless they are squeezed or bruised.

How do I know that what I have is a lipoma?

Usually a lipoma has been growing for years before you might notice it. It is fairly common to have more than one. If you notice a lump or swelling anywhere on your body, you should have it checked by your family doctor. Tests are usually not needed. Your doctor can diagnose a lipoma just by looking at it and feeling the firmness of the lump.

How are lipomas treated?

Because lipomas are almost always benign (not cancer), they usually do not need treatment. If they are painful or are growing quickly, you may want to have treatment. Treatment options include steroid shots, liposuction, or surgery. Your doctor can help you decide what is best for you.