

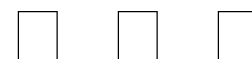


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# What Is a Lipoma?



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Have you noticed a soft, rubbery bulge under your skin somewhere?

That could be a lipoma. They happen when a lump of fat starts to grow in the soft tissue of your body. Though they're classified as tumors, they're usually harmless.

They're the most common tumor to form beneath your skin, with about 1 person in 1,000 getting one at some point. You usually find them in your upper body, arms, or thighs.

## Causes: All in the Family?

It's not clear for sure what causes them. Middle-aged men and women tend to get them more, and they run in families.

They often appear after an injury, though doctors don't know whether that's what makes them form.

Inherited conditions can bring them on. Some people who have a rare condition known as Madelung's disease can get them. This most often affects alcoholic men of Mediterranean ancestry.

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## Symptoms

They usually appear as small, soft lumps. They're usually less than 2 inches wide. Sometimes, more than one will develop.

When you press on one, it may feel doughy. It will move easily with finger pressure. They don't normally hurt, though they can cause pain if they bump up against nearby nerves or have blood vessels running through them.

## When to Call a Doctor

If you notice a lump or swelling on your body, you should have a doctor check it out. She can tell whether it's a harmless lipoma or something that needs more

tests.

In rare cases, they form inside the body, in muscles or internal organs. If one is causing you pain or affecting your muscles, you might have to get it removed.

In very rare cases, a lump may be a type of cancer called a liposarcoma, which grows rapidly and can be painful. If your doctor suspects this condition, she will most likely ask you to have more tests.

## Treatment

Since lipomas aren't harmful, many times your doctor will leave them alone. You may be asked to keep an eye on it between visits.

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