

Lipoma

The term lipoma is derived from a Greek word “lipos”, which means “fat”. Lipoma is benign tumor arising from the fat (adipose) tissue. It is a common finding but practically harmless. It affects especially seniors but it can also occur in younger persons.

Causes

The causes of lipoma occurrence are not entirely clear. Some forms are clearly related to genetics. These genetic forms usually affect more members of the same family, who suffer from numerous lipomas. Lipomas may also occur in areas exposed to a chronic mechanical stress (such as the pressure).

Symptoms

Lipomas typically arise from the subcutaneous adipose tissue, but they can occur practically anywhere in our body where there is the fat including deep tissue in the vicinity of internal organs. Skin and subcutaneous lipomas look like smaller or larger bumps covered with normal skin. When pushed gently, the lipoma is movable towards the skin. Lipomas are not painful with the exception of a specific subtype containing a high number of blood vessels, which is known as the angiomyolipoma.

Neurological symptoms may occur when a lipoma is situated near a nerve (usually in a limb), which is compressed by the tumor’s growth. The nerve compression may cause numbness, [tingling](#) and sometimes even [muscle paralysis](#) of the extremities. Lipomas located in the digestive tube may bleed but it is not so common finding.

Complications

It has been reported that the lipoma has an extremely rare possibility to turn into a malignant tumor forming [metastases](#). However, it is so rare that it has no clinical importance.

Diagnosis

Any lumps on the skin should be examined by a doctor who can decide further approach. In case of need, ultrasound of the subcutaneous tissues can be done or the lesion can be excised and histologically examined.

Treatment

The treatment is surgical. The removal of a lipoma has usually cosmetic reasons but the indication can be also the compression of the surrounding structures (typically nerves) by growing lipoma. The procedure is typically performed in local anesthesia.

