

What is a fatty lump (lipoma)?

A fatty lump, known medically as a **lipoma**, is the most common type of benign tumour that occurs in the body's soft tissues. It consists of a collection of mature fat cells surrounded by a thin capsule.

Lipomas typically develop in the subcutaneous tissue and can be found anywhere on the body, but are most frequently seen on the **torso (trunk), neck, shoulders, and arms**.

Typical Characteristics

Lipomas have very characteristic features that your doctor can often recognise during a simple examination:

- **Soft and elastic:** The lump feels soft or rubbery to the touch.
- **Freely mobile:** You can typically push the lump slightly under the skin. It is not attached to the deeper tissue.
- **Painless:** The lump itself does not usually hurt.
- **Slow growth:** It grows very slowly over months or years.

Why do lipomas occur?

The reason why some people develop lipomas is **unknown**. It is important to emphasise that lipomas **have nothing to do with being overweight** or an unhealthy lifestyle.

In some cases, there may be a **hereditary component**. Around 20% of patients have multiple lumps, and there are rare hereditary conditions where numerous lipomas are formed.

When should you see a doctor? (Red flags)

The vast majority of lipomas are harmless and require no action. However, it is crucial to see a doctor if you find a new lump or if an existing lump changes.

Contact your doctor if you experience one or more of the following warning signs:

- **Rapid growth:** The lump grows noticeably over a short period.
- **Pain or tenderness:** The lump starts to hurt, which may be because it is pressing on a nerve.
- **Firm and fixed:** The lump is attached to deeper tissue and cannot be moved under the skin.
- **Size:** The lump is larger than 5 cm in diameter.
- **Consistency:** The lump feels very hard and lumpy instead of soft and elastic.

Your doctor will perform a clinical examination and, in cases of doubt, may refer you for an **ultrasound or MRI scan** to determine whether the lump is a typical fatty lump or if it requires further investigation.

Treatment and Management

As lipomas are benign, the most common recommendation is to **observe** the lump, as long as it does not cause discomfort.

However, treatment may be considered if:

1. The lump is **painful** or interferes with the function of surrounding tissue.
2. The lump poses a **cosmetic nuisance** for the patient.
3. There is the **slightest doubt about the diagnosis**.

Surgical Removal

The removal of lipomas typically takes place via a **minor operation** under local anaesthesia. Kirurgen.dk removes the lump and its capsule through a small incision in the skin. The tissue is then sent for examination to confirm the diagnosis.

Note regarding cosmetic issues: In many public hospitals, referral criteria have been tightened, and surgical removal of small, cosmetically bothersome lipomas without physical symptoms is often **not offered in public hospitals**. In such cases, patients are treated by a surgeon in private practice or a dermatologist.

<https://www.gentoftehospital.dk/undersogelse-og-behandling/find-undersogelse-og-behandling/sider/fedtknude-i-huden-operation-for-23779.aspx>

