

Minor Surgery for Lumps and Bumps

Lipoma or “fatty tumor”

These are located in the fat layer below the skin. They grow very slowly over the course of years, but rarely get bigger than an inch or two. They usually feel round, rubbery, or firm. Lipomas are not dangerous, but can be uncomfortable if they push on a nerve or are irritated by pressure, such as from a belt or bra strap.

Epidermal Cyst

These form from a blocked duct, and are filled with waxy oils and dead skin cells, like a big acne nodule or 'zit'. These cysts arise from the skin, and if you look closely, you can usually see a 'prominent pore', where it is attached to the skin surface. They are not dangerous, but can become irritated or infected.

Other benign (non-cancer) masses such as dermatofibroma, hematoma, neurofibroma, or ganglion, are sometimes identified after removal. They are much less common, and also not dangerous.

Is it cancer?

Cancer is *very rare* in the tissues just under the skin. Cancer usually develops in 'lining' tissues, such as the skin surface, intestines, lungs or in glandular tissues such as the breast and prostate. It rarely starts in “connective tissue” such as fat, muscle or tendon.

When to worry or “Red Flags”?

- Larger than 2 inches (apricot size)
- Rapid growth
- Pain that lasts
- Interferes with activity
- Stuck to deeper tissues
- Signs of infection- hot, red, pus draining

What are the risks of surgery?

- Lump removal is a small surgery that usually goes very well, but there are risks with any surgery.
- There will be a scar. It will be about as long as the lump. Scars may be disfiguring, or cause long term pain.
- The incision may become infected.
- The lump may grow back.
- You could need more surgery to correct problems after surgery, or because of what is found during surgery

What should I do now?

Keep an eye on your lump for any of the “**red flags**” above. These are very rare, but we need to stay alert. Let your doctor know if you notice these signs.

What if I want it removed (medical necessity or cosmetic)?

Your physician will discuss with you whether they believe that the lesion is cosmetic (that your small skin growth does not represent an illness) **or** that it is medically necessary to be evaluated by the surgeon.

Removing these small lumps is usually considered cosmetic surgery. Usually this surgery will not be covered by Kaiser Permanente insurance unless there is a medical necessity.

If you are referred to the Surgery Department, the surgeon (or physician assistant/nurse practitioner) will determine whether it is medically necessary to remove the lesion and what steps are next. The visit to the Surgery Department is for an **evaluation only, no procedure or surgery will occur on your first visit**. Your usual co-pay will be charged for this evaluation.

If the lesion is considered cosmetic, it can be removed on a fee for service basis. The fee is determined by the size and location and can be anywhere from \$250-\$800 dollars. You can locate a board certified Plastic Surgeon (non Kaiser Permanente) at <http://www.plasticsurgery.org>. Or, you can schedule an appointment in the Surgery Department, Walnut Creek, by calling 925-295-6359.

If you wish to be seen for cosmetic surgery at Kaiser Permanente, Walnut Creek, you will have a consultation visit first. A \$75 charge will be made at the time of this visit. This will be deducted from the procedure fee later. Co-pay's for pathology fees shall be collected at the time of the procedure. The procedure may be done on that day, or scheduled for another time, depending on the doctor's availability and what needs to be done. Kaiser Permanente's cost of removal is comparable to other private surgeons.

If the pathology results indicate that removal of the skin growth was medically necessary, your Kaiser Permanente benefit will be used.

How do I prepare for minor surgery?

- Small masses can be removed in the doctor's office, with local anesthetic. You will be fully awake.
- You may need to stop taking Aspirin, Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory medications such as Motrin or Advil, and blood thinners for a week before surgery. Be sure to tell your doctor all the medications you are taking, and whether you should take them in the week before your operation.
- Take a good shower before surgery. Do not shave the area. Do not apply lotions or powder.
- Eat normally before surgery.
- Wear comfortable clothes that are easily removed. Consider bringing a friend or family member to drive you home.

What happens during surgery?

- The area may be shaved. Your skin will be washed with anti-septic and sterile sheets placed around the area to keep it clean.
- You will receive injections of local anesthetic to the area. This stings for 20-30 seconds, and then it will make the area numb. You will be able to feel pressure and movement, but you should not feel pain, or sharp sensations. The procedure will take 30-60 minutes.
- The solid tissue that is removed will be sent to pathology for examination.

What happens after surgery?

- The local anesthetic lasts for several hours after surgery. Use this time to get yourself home, and settled comfortably.
- Rest with an ice pack the rest of the day to prevent bruising and swelling.
- Tylenol is usually all that is needed for soreness afterwards. Depending on the location of the mass, and the type of work you do, you should be able to return to work the next day.
- Avoid strain or pressure on the area for 10 days after surgery.
- You can remove the outer bandage and get the incision wet the second day after surgery. If you have white tapes on the skin (Steri-strips), leave them in place until they loosen and come off easily. If you have visible stitches, they usually are removed in 7-14 days.
- You may get Steri-strips or stitches wet in the shower, but do not soak or scrub your incision.
- Let us know if you have fever, increasing pain and swelling, redness, warmth, or pus draining after surgery.
- If you have questions or problems after your procedure, please call the Advice Nurse at (925) 295-4070.