

All Growths and Masses are Not Created Equal Skin Lesions, Part II

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All growth and masses are not created equal. The vast majority of lumps and bumps are labeled benign, which simply means not harmful, or not spreading. These are to name a few, the skin tags, warts, sebaceous cysts, keloids and lipomas. There are others, which are termed malignant, and can grow rapidly, spread out, invade local tissues, and even become established in other remote organs such as lung or liver. This spread is called metastasis. A discussion of dangerous skin cancers will be saved for another time. So what can cause these new tissues to form and seemingly blossom up over night? There is a familial or genetic (breed) component to many types of skin growths. In other words single or multiple messages are carried in the genetic code and something turns these genes on allowing them to express themselves as a wart or a cyst. Things that can turn these genes on are age, stress, excessive sunlight in light haired breeds, drugs, and excessive use of unneeded vaccines. Another cause is a failure of normal metabolism. The thyroid gland may be imbalanced with concomitant issues of fatty tissue abnormal deposition. These lumps are called lipomas and are round to oval masses of benign fat that accumulate like a nodule or lump just under the skin in the subcutaneous zone. The most common places for these lipomas to settle are the armpits(ooh la la), the groin, the flank areas of the waist(love handles), the chest and the abdominal area. You can feel these lumps when massaging Fluffy's mammary glands, and when heavy petting her tummy, and tickle me Elmo zones. They are soft, freely movable and non-painful. So, with most of these lumps your Veterinarian will want to do a needle biopsy test to make sure that this is truly benign fatty tissue. This is a simple procedure done right during the annual check up and the results can be given usually on the same day. Lipomas are not dangerous and all they do is enlarge over time and take up space. If your pet is treated constitutionally with homeopathic remedies early enough most lipomas will stop growing or become much smaller in size over time. Conventional medicine often recommends the removal of these lumps before they enlarge. They can become quite massive in older dogs, easily tipping the scale at two to four pounds and can inhibit normal walking if present in the armpit or groin. The surgery itself is simple but the healing time can be lengthy with complications due to stretched skin and loss of blood supply to the incision area.

Sebaceous cysts are an accumulation of skin oil glands that no longer empty out at the surface, but all empty into a cyst, a thick-walled, grape-like, nodule under the skin. Sometimes they will break open and externally drain their greasy granular contents out, but can reoccur at another time. They rarely cause trouble unless they rupture internally or become infected with bacteria. They can be easily removed surgically if absolutely necessary.