

Chest Lump May Indicate Lipoma

A lump on the chest of a young dog most likely is a lipoma, a benign tumor made up of fat cells.

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Q. I have a 4-month-old Basset Hound. She is very healthy in every other manner, but she recently grew a lump on her chest rather rapidly (within three weeks). It is about one-half inch wide by maybe 3 inches long and sticks out about one-half inch. It seems to be well attached to her body. It doesn't bother her at all, and she has a great appetite. She has an appointment to see the vet, but just wondering if you have any thoughts.

A. I would venture a guess that this is a lipoma — a benign tumor made up of fat cells. Lipomas are very common lumps that show up just under the skin of dogs. They can appear anywhere but usually appear near or along the chest. They can grow quite quickly and get quite large.

Fortunately, they are easy for your veterinarian to diagnose, even without a biopsy. He or she will do a simple procedure called a fine needle aspirate, in which a hypodermic needle is gently inserted into the lump so that a sample of cells is collected. The cells are then pushed onto a glass slide with a syringe and looked at under a microscope.

Often, a clear fluid that looks like oil is collected in the needle, indicating a lipoma. If fat cells are seen on the microscope, the growth is also diagnosed as a lipoma.

Lipomas only need to be removed if they get large enough to interfere with your dog's normal body movement. In a young dog, you may want to get the lipoma removed before it gets bigger. I would recommend having it done when your dog is anesthetized to have her teeth cleaned, so she only needs to be anesthetized once.

I am sure your veterinarian will be able to diagnose this lump, either with a fine needle aspirate or biopsy. In any event, make sure that a biopsy is done if it is not a lipoma. It is rare for a young dog to have a malignant tumor, but it can happen.

Best,
Jon Geller, DVM

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