

LUMPS AND BUMPS

The problem? Lumps are common problems on the body, everybody has one. Common benign lumps include lipoma (fatty lump), cyst (particularly in hair bearing areas), mole. Also some lumps look suspicious but are completely benign.

Some lumps and bumps may not be benign and need a specific approach for diagnosis like a biopsy before formal removal. These are skin cancers, which can present in different patterns.

What you may notice?

Pain and discomfort
Discharge and infection
Itching
Bleeding
Growing, persistent lesion, 'does not look right'
Cosmetic appearance

Diagnosis? Physical examination.

Are you on blood thinners? This needs to be clearly mentioned during your consultation, as this may need to be modified for surgery.

Biopsy may be done by referring physician or by Plastic Surgery. This is either a small area taken for pathology (punch biopsy) or complete removal for diagnostic purposes only (excision biopsy).

Ultrasound for undiagnosed lump may be necessary.

Treatment? Leave alone if not causing a problem. If removal for lesion is thought to be necessary it is done under local anaesthesia in ambulatory care at the hospital. Removal of the lesion may be a simple excision or may require a local flap (soft tissue mobilization) or skin grafting to close larger or sensitive areas. Some patients with more complex issues or ill-defined skin cancers will require referral to tertiary centres in Toronto or other places.

Consequences, risks and complications? Scar, longer scar, hypertrophic scar, keloid scar, cosmetically unsightly scar, tight scar, depressed/stretched out scar, infection, swelling, bleeding, bruising, wound healing issues, incision pain, slow recovery, nerve damage, hair loss (if on the scalp area), contour deformity, flap necrosis, skin graft failure, recurrence, further treatment or surgery including referral to out of town facility.

Recovery? This will depend on your surgery and healing. Typically for most smaller lesions, a few days off from work and activities is reasonable. For larger excision, skin grafting, flap reconstruction-- a minimum of 2-4wks of initial healing time. Remember the scar initially is fragile and it takes time (1-2yrs) for scars to mature and consolidate.

