

# Skin masses and tumors



Skin masses are very common, especially in dogs. They can be caused by injury, infection, tumors, cysts, warts, or calluses, and may range in size from a tiny pinpoint swelling to many inches in diameter. Tumors are classified as benign (noncancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Cancerous tumors can be aggressive and life-threatening.

- ▶ Every growth should be evaluated by your veterinary team, especially if it grows, changes shape or color, or becomes painful, ulcerated, or infected.

## What do they look like?

Common signs:

- Swelling on or under the skin
- Skin redness or color change
- Pain



## How are they diagnosed?

- Clinical signs
  - Physical exam results
  - Needle aspiration or surgical biopsy
  - Laboratory tests
- ▶ Your veterinary team may need to evaluate cell samples from the mass before making a diagnosis.

## How are they treated?

Treatment depends on the type and size of the mass. Many skin masses are benign and do not need treatment at all.

- If your team suspects a malignant growth, they typically recommend immediate removal and evaluation
- Benign masses may need to be removed if they interfere with normal movement and function
- Masses due to infection (like an abscess) may require surgical treatment, drain placement, and antibiotics



- ▶ Early removal of a cancerous mass can help prevent cancer from spreading to other places in the body.



## How to help your pet

- Administer all medications as prescribed
- Have any masses checked—early cancer detection can greatly impact your pet's prognosis
- Monitor any growths carefully and schedule checkups if you have any concerns, or as recommended by your veterinary team
- Contact your veterinary team with any questions

