



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Soft Tissue Tumor Surgery

How do I get started?

It is important prior to surgery for patients to spend some time educating themselves about the pros and cons of soft tissue tumor surgery. Although patients who undergo soft tissue tumor surgery are typically happy, this elective operation is not for everybody. The main risks of surgery are bleeding, infection, damage to adjacent structure, pain, contour irregularity, and scarring. Read the educational materials provided and on our website including consent forms prior to your surgery. Make sure that your surgeon is Board Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) and American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS). Please check out websites and links at: www.drjlowe.com

Do I need soft tissue tumor surgery?

Patients with a localized tumor or several tumors of the body, extremities, or head & neck are usually the best candidates for in office surgery under local anesthetic. Patients considering removal of a small tumor need to decide if the risks are worth it or not? Is the tumor increasing in size, painful, inflamed or infected? Many family doctors say if the tumor is not bothering you do not worry about it. Unfortunately, many soft tissue tumors are inclusion cyst prone to cycles of inflammation and even infection. It is usually best to remove a tumor when it is not inflamed or infected. Sometimes when a soft tissue tumor becomes infected it can be removed but also must be left open to pack for several weeks. Also as the tumor enlarges the surgical incision will also need to be made longer to allow for adequate removal. The general "rule of thumb" should be applied which means that if a tumor equals the tip of your thumb it is usually best to remove. The most important thing is for patients to remove soft tissue tumors if they are enlarging, painful, deforming, or result in functional limitation. Every soft tissue tumor has the potential to represent malignancy or cancer. A frank discussion with a board certified plastic surgeon will help patients make the right decision about this procedure.

Is soft tissue surgery covered by health insurance?

Soft tissue tumor surgery by definition is a medical procedure in most situations. It is covered by insurance as a stand-alone procedure. Some patients have scarring or tumors that occur after cosmetic procedures that may not be covered under insurance. However, soft tissue tumors that occur after trauma or following reconstruction are usually covered or are covered under revision medical coding. Many patients undergoing soft tissue tumor surgery require a referral from their primary care physician or pre-approval from their insurance in advance of surgery. Most soft tissue tumor surgery performed in our office or under local anesthesia is covered but patients are required to pay part or all of their deductible in advance. Patients are encouraged to review the fees associated with surgery with our office or their insurance before surgery. Dr. Lowe's staff will be happy to discuss these issues during the course of the consultation and consent process.

What is the difference surgery under local or general anesthesia?

There are a number of different ways to perform soft tissue surgery. Most plastic surgeons performing significant surgery with multiple tumors, tumor near a vital structure, or large tumor prefer patients to be under anesthesia to ensure patient comfort and safety. Small tumors and/or no more than two tumors may be removed under local anesthetic in most cases. Local procedures require preparation and local injection that can be well managed in certain areas. In our practice soft tissue tumor surgery is billed based on size, location, and complexity. Patients rarely complain of significant pain following soft tissue tumor surgery regardless of the technique. A consultation with your surgeon allows patients to determine the technique best suited for them.

Will the surgical scar be noticeable?

All soft tissue surgery requires surgical incisions in the skin. Multiple incisions are required in most cases for multiple tumors. Plastic surgeons try to place incisions in the natural creases or folds of the body to conceal the scar. Dr. Lowe will review scar treatment once the incisions heal. Scars typically look the worse at 2 months and then improve by 6 months. Prominent scars are rare but can be improved with minor revision or laser treatment. Contour irregularities can be seen due to soft tissue displacement, poor compression, or patient genetics (some patients just scar more). Patients should have a frank discussion with their plastic surgeon to help them understand where the incision or scar will be placed.

Will the soft tissue tumor recur or come back?

The results of soft tissue tumor surgery do not always last forever. The recurrence rate for most soft tissue tumors is around 10%. The number can be higher or lower depending on the tumor itself. Patients who tend to form soft tissue tumor such as cyst or lipomas often have multiple tumors in different locations. All soft tissue tumors are sent to pathology for examination. If the soft tissue tumor is malignant further surgeries will be required to treat the tumor. Dr. Lowe will discuss his findings as well as the pathology after surgery or at follow-up.

Does future surgery cost a lot?

The cost for revision is limited for patients who experience minor complications following surgery when returning to the original surgeon. Most revisions can be address with a simple in-office procedure performed under local anesthetic. In some cases, revision surgery is necessary to address more complex issues. The kind of big results plastic surgeons and patients expect often carry with them greater risks of revision. Patients should follow post-operative instructions closely to limit revision rates. Patients should usually wait 4-6 months to fully judge clinical results or surgical scars. Dr. Lowe performs a number of revisions on patients who are unhappy with a previous surgeon. Most of these patients had surgery at a spa or with a poorly trained “cosmetic surgeon.” Dr. Lowe recommends patients first return to their board certified plastic surgeon to discuss common concerns, complications, or soft tissue recurrence. Patients should talk to their surgeon about the risks and potential complications of elective surgery.

Where and when should I have surgery?

One of the most important decisions for patients considering soft tissue surgery is where and when. Large procedures can be performed at a hospital with overnight stay or surgical facility with home care. The benefit of a hospital setting is overnight pain management and care. Patients in a surgical facility will be given a period of recovery and then go home the same day. In general, small soft tissue procedures are better in outpatient setting and larger or multiple soft tissue procedures are better in inpatient setting. Most patients require very little assistance at home the day after the procedure, feel better at 2 days, and recovery fully by 3 weeks. Although Dr. Lowe performs most soft tissue surgery in his office based surgical center under local, each patient should make their own decision of when and where they should have surgery.

What are the restrictions after surgery?

The recovery from soft tissue surgery is usually predictable. Patients are asked to limit activity for 1-2 weeks after surgery. Patients wear an isolated dressing, splint, or garment for several days after surgery. Some patients require drains to help decrease fluid collection and control swelling. Most drains used in this situation stay for 1-2 days, but bigger surgery may require drains for longer. Sutures usually stay in place for 2-3 weeks and may even fall out on their own. Patients scars may take 6 months or two years to fully mature. Patients often report swelling, numbness, contour irregularities, and minor pain for up to 6 months after surgery.

What about patient safety?

There are a variety of safety concerns related to soft tissue surgery. Many of the concerns are related to post-operative swelling and have been reviewed. However, in most cases the safety of

surgery is most dependent on the surgeon and facility. Soft tissue surgery is usually an elective operation reserved in for patients in good health in an outpatient setting. Dr. Lowe is a real plastic surgeon, who performs real surgery, in a real surgical center. As a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) he is required to follow guidelines designed to ensure the best patient safety and outcomes. Dr. Lowe proudly performs surgery in accredited hospitals and surgical facilities. Most of his cosmetic patients undergo surgery at his certified in-office operating suite, Associates Surgery Center of Oklahoma (ASCO). ASCO is fully certified by the American Association for the Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF). For further information about safety and credentials go to: www.AAAASF.org or www.drjlowe.com

Should I wait and think about my options?

Soft tissue surgery is rarely an urgent surgery. Most patients have been dealing with soft tissue tumors for years before they seek consultation. In general, removing tumors when they are small and not infected is recommended when possible. Although the procedure carries limited risks, the benefits can be substantial. Patients require a period of recovery, wound care, compression, and scar treatment. Further procedures may be required based on the clinical outcome or pathology report. Patient should choose a board certified plastic surgeon that they trust, takes time, reviews risks, and puts safety first. One of the most important aspects of the procedures is patient care and follow-up. When possible, patients should talk about their plans with physicians, family members, and significant others. Patients should have realistic expectations regarding the surgery, recovery, and results. Soft tissue tumor surgery is often the right thing for the right person

What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?

1. Review the incision location and size in advance of surgery
2. Make sure you have an adequate time to recover and care for the wound.
3. Understand risks (bleeding, infection, damage to adjacent structures, and scars).
4. Remove tumors before they get too big or infected.
5. Cancel incision in natural creases to avoid a visible scar.
6. Larger tumors require larger incisions and can leave contour irregularities.
7. Most soft tissue surgery is quick with a short recovery.
8. Large or multiple tumors may be performed at a hospital and require an overnight stay.
9. Surgeon and facility certification and safety matters.
10. Pick and stick with your surgeon when possible.