

## What is a Seroma?

A seroma is a collection of clear, yellowish fluid called "serum" that builds up in the body. Serum is a blood component that does not contain red or white blood cells. After surgery, this fluid can accumulate in areas where tissue was removed or disturbed, often in the space between the skin and deeper tissues.

Seromas can occur after many types of surgery, but they are most common following procedures where large amounts of tissue are removed, such as:

- Hernia repair
- Breast surgery (mastectomy, reconstruction, or augmentation)
- Excision of large soft tissue masses
- Lymph node removal (lymphadenectomy)

Seromas most commonly appear one to two weeks after surgery, they can also form after a significant injury

## Why Do Seromas Happen?

Surgery disrupts normal tissue and blood vessels, and as the body heals, fluid can seep into the open spaces left behind. In some cases, this fluid accumulates rather than being absorbed by the body, leading to the formation of a seroma. Larger surgeries, especially those involving tissue removal, pose a higher risk for seromas.

## Symptoms of a Seroma

Seromas don't always cause noticeable symptoms, but when they do, the following signs might be present:

- **Swelling:** A lump or swelling may develop near the surgical site.
- **Discomfort:** Some patients experience mild pain or tenderness in the affected area.
- **Fluid leakage:** If the fluid is not fully contained under the skin, clear or slightly reddish fluid may drain from the surgical site.

In some cases, seromas can become infected. If this happens, additional symptoms may include:

- Fever

- Redness or warmth around the area
- Hardened skin over the seroma
- Purulent drainage from the site

### **When Should You See a Doctor?**

If you notice any unusual swelling, fluid buildup, or discomfort after surgery, it's important to consult your surgeon. While seromas are typically harmless, they can occasionally cause complications, such as infection, and it's best to have them evaluated by a healthcare professional.

### **Treatment Options for Seromas**

The treatment of a seroma largely depends on its size and whether it's causing symptoms. Here are some common approaches:

- **Observation:** In many cases, small seromas that are not causing discomfort will resolve independently as the body gradually absorbs the fluid over time. Your doctor may recommend simply watching the area and waiting.
- **Drainage:** For larger seromas or those causing discomfort, your doctor may use a needle to drain the fluid. This process may need to be repeated a few times, as the fluid can re-accumulate.
- **Surgical Drain Placement:** If fluid buildup persists, your doctor may insert a small drain under the skin to allow fluid to escape continuously until it stops collecting.
- **Surgery:** Chronic seroma usually develops a capsule that may require repeat surgery. This is very rare
- **Infection Management:** If a seroma becomes infected, it's crucial to drain the fluid and clean the area. In more severe cases, reopening part of the surgical incision may be necessary. Antibiotics will also be prescribed to treat the infection.

### **Can Seromas Be Prevented?**

While seromas aren't always preventable, specific measures may help reduce the risk:

- **Use of Surgical Drains:** For surgeries that involve large amounts of tissue removal, doctors may insert drains to allow excess fluid to escape. Drains are typically removed once fluid output decreases.
- **Compression Dressings:** Applying pressure to the surgical site with a compressive bandage can help reduce fluid buildup. Depending on your doctor's

instructions, these dressings are usually placed at the end of surgery and may be kept in place for several days.

- **Icing the Area:** Applying ice packs to the surgical site for the first two to three days post-surgery can help reduce swelling and fluid buildup.

## **Conclusion**

While seromas can be an annoying part of post-surgical recovery, they are usually harmless and often resolve independently. Monitoring the area, following your doctor's advice, and watching for signs of infection can help ensure that a seroma doesn't become a larger issue. If you're ever unsure about a lump, swelling, or fluid buildup after surgery, it's always best to contact your surgeon for guidance.