

## A Gerbil Has A Mass Under Its Tail

**Is the mass under a gerbil's tail cancer, an abscess or something else?**

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**Q:** I have a 1½-year-old, male gerbil. I have noticed something under the base of his tail. I am wondering if it is cancer. It's about the size of a small pea and is red and rough looking. It does not look like it is bleeding, but it looks raw. It is difficult to get a really good look at it because gerbils don't sit still very long.

Other than that, he is his normal self — running, digging, chewing, eating and doing normal gerbil activities. He is very active and his weight is normal.

I have an exotic veterinarian I can take him to, but I am concerned about putting the little guy under the stress of going to the veterinary office. It is also quite cold right now. I am considering taking him to the vet to get this checked out. Can you give me advice on the best way to transport him?

**A:** The best advice I can give you is to call your veterinarian and see what the office recommends for transportation. In most cases, if gerbils are generally in good health, they can take the stress of a visit and transportation. If you have a travel cage or carrier, that is perfect. You can cover that with a towel and keep it in a warm area of the car, if you are driving. If you are very worried about the cage becoming too cold, place one or two instant hand warmers on top of the towel taking care to keep warmers away from your gerbil. I would be careful of water bottles in the cage during transport because they can spill or leak. If your gerbil becomes wet, he could become cold.

As to the red mass, it could be cancer, but it could just as likely be a benign form that will not spread. It could also be an infection, such as an abscess. Finally, this could also be a skin mass such as a lipoma that would cause no problem at all.