

CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision is cutting away the foreskin, the skin that covers the glans, or the head of the penis. It is elective surgery- this means that it is not necessary. Parents make the choice whether or not to have their son circumcised. Some of the factors that affect your decision are:

- **Cleanliness** - In uncircumcised males, a substance called smegma gathers under the foreskin. This can lead to odor or infection if the penis is not cleaned regularly. In circumcised males, the foreskin is gone, so smegma cannot build up. An uncircumcised boy can be taught to wash his penis to get rid of the smegma as part of his daily bathing routine.
- **Tradition** - Sometimes circumcision is chosen because parents want their son to look like his circumcised father or older brothers. Some parents may also be concerned that their child not be physically different physically from his peers during their teen years.
- **Cancer prevention** - Some believe that circumcision prevents cancer of the penis and prostate in old age. There is no evidence that circumcision protects against cancer of the prostate. When the penis is not cleaned regularly and properly, smegma can build up. It is thought that this smegma may contain a carcinogen, a cancer-causing agent. Higher rates of penile cancer have been found in uncircumcised males who have very poor hygiene. Uncircumcised men who have very good hygiene, though, have very low rates of this cancer.
- **Prevention of infection and inflammation**
- **Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases** - Some studies show uncircumcised males may have a higher risk for certain sexually transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhea and syphilis. Other studies, though show no such increased risk.
- **Personal considerations**

The Procedure

Although circumcision can be done at any time in a male's life, it is usually done soon after birth-before the mother and baby leave the hospital. The baby will not be fed beforehand, because he may vomit afterwards if his stomach is full. The infant is held with straps on a special circumcision tray. A local anesthetic may be used.

Various surgical techniques are used, but they generally follow the same procedure:

1. The surgical area is cleaned.
2. The foreskin is removed after a special instrument or plastic ring is applied. There is minimal bleeding, and it is easily controlled.
3. Ointment and gauze may be placed over the cut to protect it from rubbing against the diaper. The baby will cry during the procedure and for a short period afterward.

Risks

Any surgery carries risks. Although rare, hemorrhage (excessive bleeding), infection, and injury to the penis, scrotum (which contains the testes), or urethra (through which urine is emptied) can occur. Long-term complications include deformity and scarring. These problems are uncommon.

Certain infants should not be circumcised; for others, it should be delayed. Some reasons for not doing or delaying circumcision include:

- Prematurity (born before 37 weeks)
- Illness
- Signs of distress at birth
- Hemophilia (a “bleeder”)
- Abnormalities in the area of the penis

CIRCUMCISION CARE

Little care of the circumcised penis is necessary. Rinse the circumcised area at each diaper change by squeezing warm water over the tip of the penis. You may use Vaseline on the tip of the penis with each diaper change for the first few days after the circumcision. This is not necessary, but may prevent the circumcision site from sticking to the diaper. After the circumcision is healed, you can bathe your baby in a tub without fear of harming the circumcision or penis.

There should be no bleeding. The head of the penis may show signs of irritation and appear whitish or yellowish in places as it heals.

If used, the plastibell will fall off in 3-5 days. The rim of the skin in front of the string will turn black and come off with the bell. Do not pull the plastibell off even if it's barely on -- the plastibell will come off by itself. You will probably find it loose in your baby's diaper.

Call the pediatrician:

1. If the penis becomes red or swollen.
2. Your baby does not pass urine for longer than 8 hours.
3. Any green drainage.
4. Increased temperature.