

Circumcision

What is Circumcision?

- The removal of the foreskin (the foreskin is the fold of skin that covers the glans (head) of the penis).
- Circumcision is a non-therapeutic procedure; which means that it is not medically necessary and is usually done for religious, cultural and social reasons.
- It is important to be aware of all of the risks and benefits of circumcision before making a decision.

Risks of Circumcision:

- Surgical complication is possible and occurs in a small number of infants. Complications that can occur include excessive bleeding, infection in the area and too much skin being removed. For every 1000 boys who are circumcised approximately 20-30 will have a surgical complication.
- Some infants may need to have a circumcision repeated due to poor results. This occurs is approximately 10 out of every 1000 circumcisions.

Benefits of Circumcision:

- Risk of the infant developing a urinary tract infection (UTI) during the first year of life is slightly decreased. During the first year of life 7 out of every 1000 boys who are uncircumcised will be admitted to the hospital for a UTI, while this number decreases to 2 out of every 1000 boys who are circumcised.
- Very slight decrease in the risk of developing penile cancer (this type of cancer is rare in all males).
- Prevention of Phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin) and foreskin infections.

The Canadian Pediatric Society has determined that the risks and benefits of circumcision are relatively equal and so they DO NOT recommend routine circumcision. (reviewed Sept 8, 2015 by the CPS, <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/circumcision>)

Common Myths about Circumcision:

- Myth: Circumcision in males reduces the incidence of cervical cancer in females
 - Fact: Exposure to uncircumcised sexual partners has not been found to cause cervical cancer, especially since the widespread vaccination for HPV in both girls and boys.
- Myth: Circumcision in males can help to decrease the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STI).
 - Fact: The Canadian Pediatric Society agrees that cirrcs had no significant effect on the incidence of common STD

Caring for an Uncircumcised Penis in Infancy

- An uncircumcised penis is easy to keep clean and requires no special care.
- Keep your baby's penis clean by gently washing the area during his bath. This does not require any special products in fact no soap is needed at all.
- Change diapers frequently to help keep the area clean.
- **Do not try to pull back the foreskin.** The foreskin is not usually fully retractable until age 3-5 years and sometimes not even until puberty. Never force it.

Caring for an Uncircumcised Penis in an Older Child:

- When your son gets older it is normal for him to pull on his foreskin and this is not a cause for concern; he will not hurt himself.
- When the foreskin does separate old skin cells will shed and new ones will form to replace them. The dead skin cells look like white lumps and will work their way down the penis to the tip of the foreskin. If you see them under the skin you do not need to force them out just wipe them away when they do come out.
- When the foreskin is fully retractable, teach your son to wash underneath it each day. **Always pull the foreskin back over the head immediately after washing.**

When to Seek Medical Advice for an Uncircumcised Child:

- The opening of the foreskin should allow for a normal urine stream. If you notice that the stream is weak or that your son appears to have difficulty or discomfort when urinating speak to your child's doctor.
- If the foreskin has swelling, redness or discharge these could be signs of infection.
- If the foreskin is pulled back and gets stuck behind the head of the penis seek medical attention immediately.

Care for the Circumcised Penis:

- Fasten the diaper loosely to prevent rubbing or pressure on the incision site.
- Squeeze warm water from a clean washcloth over the penis to wash it.
- A yellow crust over the incision site is normal and should not be removed.

When to Seek Medical Advice for a Circumcised Child:

- Check the circumcision site at each diaper change. If you notice more than a few drops of blood the day after or any blood after the first day contact your child's doctor.
- If you notice any drainage, swelling or fever. This could be a sign of infection and you should contact your child's doctor.
- If your son does not urinate as frequently after the circumcision as he did prior go to the emergency department.

*Note: Information adapted from the Canadian Pediatric Society
Reviewed January 28, 16 by PIPC*