

Circumcision: *Information for Parents*

Circumcision is a surgical procedure in which the skin covering the end of the penis is removed, thereby exposing the tip of the penis. This procedure is performed by a doctor, typically in the first few days of life.

While studies have shown some medical benefits of circumcision, these benefits are not sufficient for the Academy of Pediatrics to recommend that all infants be circumcised.

Circumcision is not essential to your son's health. Before you decide whether or not to have your son circumcised you should look at the benefits and risks.

Reasons why you may decide to have your son circumcised

Medical Benefits:

- There is a slightly lower risk of urinary tract infection (UTI). In the first year of life a circumcised infant has a 1:1,000 chance of developing a UTI. An uncircumcised infant has a 1:100 chance.
- Lower risk of penile cancer.
- Slightly lower risk for acquiring a sexually transmitted infection, including HIV.
- Prevents infection of the foreskin.
- Prevents phimosis. This is a condition in uncircumcised males in which the foreskin will not retract.
- Easier genital hygiene.

Social Reasons:

- All the other men in your family are circumcised
- You don't want your son to feel "different"

Religious or Cultural Beliefs:

- If you follow Jewish or Islamic faiths, you may have your son circumcised for religious or cultural reasons.

Reasons why you may decide not to have your son circumcised

Fear of risks:

- As with all surgical procedures, there are the possibilities of complications. However, they are rare and usually minor. The risks include: bleeding, cutting the foreskin too short or too long, improper healing, and infection.

Believe foreskin is needed:

- Some parents may believe that foreskin is needed to protect the tip of the penis. If there is no foreskin the tip of the penis could become irritated and cause the opening of the penis to become too small. This could then lead to urination problems that require surgical correction.

Believe sex is affected:

- Some people think that circumcision makes the tip of the penis less sensitive, leading to a decrease in sexual pleasure later in life.

Proper hygiene teaching:

- Parents feel that if they teach their son proper hygiene, it will lower his chances of acquiring infection, an STI, or cancer of the penis.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Circumcision

Is circumcision painful?

Circumcision is painful when performed without pain medication. To reduce pain and stress, the doctor will inject a local anesthetic prior the procedure. Side effects from the pain medicine are rare and usually not serious.

What should I expect for my son after circumcision?

Following the procedure the tip of the penis may look raw or yellowish. Petroleum jelly and gauze will be put in place over the penis. The gauze should be changed with each diapering to reduce the risk of infection. After 24 hours, the gauze is no longer needed. However, continue to use petroleum jelly on the penis and inside the diaper. The jelly will help prevent the penis from sticking to the diaper.

Are there any problems that can occur after circumcision?

While problems after circumcision are rare, be sure to call your sons doctor if:

- Your son does not urinate within 6-8 hours after the procedure
- There is persistent bleeding
- Redness around the tip of the penis gets worse after 3-5 days

What if I chose not to have my son circumcised?

Be sure to talk to your son's doctor regarding proper hygiene to keep your son's penis clean. When he is older, teach him how to keep his penis clean, just as he would learn to keep other parts of his body clean.

It is several years before the foreskin can fully retract, and should never be forced. Gently washing the genital area while bathing is all that is needed to keep the penis clean.

Later in life, when the foreskin fully retracts, teach your son how to wash underneath the foreskin every day by:

- Gently pulling the foreskin away from the head of the penis
- Rinsing the head of the penis and inside fold of the foreskin with soap and warm water
- Returning the foreskin back over the head of the penis