

What is Circumcision?

A circumcision is the removal of the foreskin (the fold of skin that covers the head of the penis). Most circumcisions are non-medically necessary procedures. They are usually done for religious, cultural and social reasons.

Risks of Circumcision:

- Circumcision is a painful procedure.
- Problems resulting from the surgery are usually minor.
- Surgical complication includes 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 a repeat circumcision because of poor results. This occurs in approximately 10 out of every 1000 circumcisions.

Benefits of Circumcision:

Boys who are circumcised may benefit from:

- Slight decrease in the risk of developing a urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Slight decrease in the risk of HPV, HSV (herpes) and 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 does not recommend the routine circumcision of every newborn male. (Newborn Male Circumcision, Reviewed Feb 28 2018 by the CPS)

If you decide to go ahead with circumcision

- Talk to the provider about cost, possible complications and pain relief
- Newborn babies feel pain. The practitioner should use some type of local anaesthetic. Additional methods of pain should also be discussed.

Caring for a circumcised penis:

- After the circumcision you can comfort you baby by holding him and nursing him.
- The penis will take 7 to 10 days to heal
- Call your healthcare provider if:
 - There is persistent bleeding
 - The redness and swelling around the circumcision do not start to improve in 48 hours
 - Your baby develops a fever (temp of 38 degrees Celsius or higher)
 - Your baby does not pass urine within 12 hours of the procedure
 - There is green or foul smelling discharge from the penis

Caring for an Uncircumcised Penis

- 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 – no special soaps needed.
- 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 and sometimes not until puberty
- Once the foreskin is fully retractable, teach your son to wash underneath it daily . Always pull the foreskin back over the head immediately
- 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.

Note: Information adapted from the Canadian Pediatric Society Reviewed in Sept 2015. Reviewed by PIPC Oct 2019