

# What is Circumcision?

Boys are born with a hood of skin that covers the head of their penis called the foreskin. Circumcision is a surgical procedure to remove the foreskin. It is most often performed in a hospital nursery during the first 10 days of a baby's life. Routine circumcision of a newborn baby boy takes about 5 to 10 minutes.

## Benefits and Risks

In the U.S., the American Urological Association (AUA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) each have a policy statement on circumcision. Both groups recommend that it be offered as a choice to parents.

You should talk with your child's doctor about the health risks and benefits, and decide what will work for your family.

If you decide to have your son circumcised at the hospital, your pediatrician, family doctor or obstetrician will perform the procedure before you bring your baby home.

In some instances, the doctor may suggest the procedure be delayed or not done at all. Premature babies who still require medical care in the hospital nursery may not be circumcised until they are ready to go home. Circumcision might not be an option if certain blood-clotting disorders exist or if the baby is born with physical abnormalities of the penis.

## Benefits of Circumcision

Circumcision might have various health benefits. Circumcised males have easier hygiene, as it is simpler to wash the penis, but boys with uncircumcised penises can be taught to wash under the foreskin. Circumcision also lowers the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs), especially in the first year of life. Once they mature into adult males, circumcised males may have a lower risk of contracting some sexually transmitted diseases.

Circumcision doesn't affect fertility. It also is not thought to enhance or lessen sexual pleasure for men or their partners.

## Risks of Circumcision

Problems from circumcision are rare. When there are problems, they are often minor and easy to treat. Mild bleeding may occur, but this rarely requires further intervention. Make sure to inform

your doctor if there is a family history of a bleeding disorder. Circumcision may cause discomfort or pain, but there are safe and helpful pain relief choices your doctor can discuss with you ahead of time.

While not common, the penis could become infected. Signs of infection are redness or swelling that do not go away. These signs may be accompanied by a fever. If you see any signs of infection, call your doctor right away. When caught quickly, these problems are easy to treat.

## Procedure

During a circumcision, the penis and foreskin are cleaned and the foreskin is removed. Parents should talk with their doctor about pain relief choices to help reduce any discomfort during the procedure, and for several hours after the procedure. A topical numbing cream can be put on the penis before the procedure or an injectable anesthetic can be used to numb the area before the procedure. Along with the anesthetic, acetaminophen is sometimes given as well.

## After Procedure

After circumcision, caring for the penis is simple but important. Wash the area gently with warm water. Pat dry and put on a new bandage with antibiotic ointment each time you change the diaper. It should take about a week to heal. It's normal for there to be a little swelling, redness and maybe blood at first. If these problems last several days or seem worse, have your baby seen by a doctor. Also talk to your baby's doctor if he gets a fever or doesn't have a wet diaper within 12 hours of circumcision.

## More Information

It is the parents' choice whether to circumcise their son. If you have questions or concerns, talk to your doctor before the baby is born. This will give you enough time to make an informed choice.