



## Circumcision

<p>What is circumcision?</p>
<p>When a baby boy is born, the end of his penis is covered with a layer of skin called the foreskin. This extra skin has two main functions: to protect the end of the penis, or glans, and to provide sexual pleasure. Circumcision is a procedure that surgically removes this foreskin. Importantly, this is not required by law, nor is it medically necessary - it is a choice made by you, the parent.</p>
<p>The procedure typically takes anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes, and is performed by a doctor, usually in the nursery before the child goes home after delivery.</p>
<p>Is it painful?</p>
<p>Recent studies have confirmed that babies do experience pain during this procedure, but steps can be taken to minimize this. Often an injection of anesthesia into the base of the penis is given to block the feelings of pain. Also, a sugar solution can be administered to the baby by mouth. Most importantly, you should discuss pain control with the doctor who is performing the circumcision.</p>
<p>What are the benefits of circumcision?</p>
<p>Circumcision is often performed for religious or cultural reasons. In English speaking, Western countries, most males are circumcised. Conversely, circumcisions for non-religious reasons are rarely done in Europe, Asia, or South America. In the past, up to 90% of all males born in the United States were circumcised, but today that number has dropped to 60%. The reasons that some parents choose to have their son circumcised: they want their son to look like other males in their family, or are afraid they will be picked on for looking different. Also, circumcision has been suggested as a good way to keep the penis clean. This has not been shown to be true.</p>
<p>Some research has shown some medical benefits to having your son circumcised. As an example, some studies have shown a small decrease in risk of urinary infections early in life. And, while extremely rare, the risk of penile cancer is lower in circumcised males. It also may decrease the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Occasionally a child will need a circumcision later in life because of cancer, injury or infection. Circumcisions may reduce some of these risks but fewer than 10% of uncircumcised males will need the procedure later in life.</p>
<p>What are the risks of circumcision?</p>
<p>All surgical procedures, including circumcision, carry risks. These include excessive bleeding, infection, problems with anesthesia, and a poor cosmetic result. Rarely there can be injury to the glans, shaft or urethra of the penis. All of these complications, however, are very rare and affect only a small number of babies.</p>

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<p>Care of the uncircumcised penis.</p>
<p>If your child has not been circumcised, his foreskin will usually separate from the glans in about three to five years. Once this has occurred, the foreskin should be pulled back and washed with soap and water. Dry the foreskin, before pulling it forward. The foreskin should never be forcibly pulled back when there is</p>

resistance.

### Care of the circumcised penis.

After your son's circumcision is done, a Vaseline gauze dressing is usually applied. Remove this gauze after 24 hours. To do this, apply Vaseline to the gauze with a diaper change, then at the next diaper change take the gauze off. Clean the circumcision site with warm water and a cotton ball once or twice a day. Apply Vaseline for several days. This helps keep the area clean and keeps the wound site from adhering to the diaper. At first, the penis will appear red. In a few days, you may notice a soft yellow scab. This is normal and will go away in a few days. During this process, you will need to watch for redness, swelling, bleeding or drainage that does not go away. If you notice any of these, notify your baby's doctor. Usually, the circumcision needs no further care once it has healed. Sometimes a small portion of foreskin remains attached to the glans. It should be pulled back gently and cleaned during bath time.

### Special situations that influence circumcisions.

There are a few situations that may cause a circumcision to be delayed. Babies that are born too soon need to wait until they grow before they can have a circumcision. Sometimes a baby is born with a birth defect of the penis. In this circumstance, a urologist may be consulted before the circumcision can be performed. If there is a history of bleeding disorders, your baby's doctor may ask you to wait until the risk of bleeding can be determined.

### When do I need to make a decision?

This decision is best made before your baby is born. The procedure can be performed at the hospital or as an outpatient procedure with local anesthesia up to 12 months of age. Many pediatricians' offices, however, are not equipped for this procedure. Thereafter, this procedure usually requires general anesthesia. As a parent, it is strongly recommended that you discuss this topic with your baby's doctor before making the final decision.