

# Circumcision (for parents of newborns)

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## **What is circumcision?**

Circumcision is the surgical removal of the skin (called foreskin or preuce) covering the tip or head of the penis (glans penis). At birth, the normal foreskin is attached to the glans and has a tight opening (preputial ring) at the end.

Circumcision is one of the oldest operations performed. It is practiced as a religious rite by many faiths and by others as a social custom. Sometimes it is done because of a specific problem with the foreskin. Routine circumcision was once advocated for all newborn males, but the current feeling is that it is not necessary for all baby boys. Most boys will do fine later in life if their foreskins are not removed. A few may eventually need circumcision because of narrowing at the tip (phimosis), infections (posthitis), irritation, or very rarely, because of tumors. The foreskin may be a source for urinary tract infections, and circumcision may be a good idea in boys with recurrent urinary tract infections.

## **How do I care for my uncircumcised infant?**

Care of the uncircumcised infant is easy. We do not recommend pulling back on the foreskin to expose the tip or head of the penis. As the boy gets older, the natural processes of erections and accumulation of old skin remnants between the inner foreskin and glans can cause the foreskin to eventually separate from the tip of the penis. By age 5-6 years, the foreskin should pull back easily, and at that time, boys should learn to pull the foreskin back daily to clean and dry the tip of the penis.

## **Is circumcision a routine procedure?**

We normally do not do routine circumcision unless there is a specific medical reason, but there may be family, cultural, or religious reasons for wanting a circumcision. In some situations, circumcision desired shortly after birth was deferred because of other medical reasons or concerns. For example: if the baby has a birth defect called hypospadias (where the urinary opening is not at the tip of the penis but rather on the underside of the shaft) or chordee (which means bending of the penis) we leave the foreskin in place for use in later surgery to correct the defects.

## **How is circumcision performed?**

In very young babies, circumcision can be performed in the clinic with local anesthesia and a special clamp. In older babies and children, we think general anesthesia and a formal operation is safer and more humane. The main purpose of circumcision is to remove the foreskin to expose the tip of the penis.

## **What are the possible risks associated with circumcision?**

The complications of circumcision include

- Bleeding
- infection
- skin separation
- excess residual foreskin
- narrowing of the urinary opening (meatal stenosis)
- concealed penis

## **What should I expect after circumcision?**

In the first few days after circumcision, there may be a little bleeding. A few minutes of firm, but not excessive, pressure usually solves this.

If the bleeding persists or if there is any unusual swelling or redness, or anything else that worries you - bring the child to the pediatric Emergency Room at Michigan Medicine and ask them to page us from the Urology Service. If this is not convenient, any nearby emergency room should be able to evaluate the problem and contact us.

### **What are the post-operative instructions?**

Apply an antibiotic ointment, Vaseline petroleum jelly or any other clean salve to the glans with every diaper change after circumcision, for at least a few months to try to protect the newly-exposed urinary opening from diaper irritation. If any questions, problems or worries arise 204 weeks after circumcision please calls us.

### **What is the number to call?**

- During business hours, weekdays between 8-5 pm call the Urology Call Center (734) 936-7030 or (866) URO-MICH (876-6424)
- After hours and on weekends and holidays call (734) 936-6267 (Michigan Medicine Operator) and ask for the Urology resident on call

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Author: Julian Wan, MD

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