

# Circumcision

## *What Parents Should Know*



Parents of newborn baby boys face a choice about circumcision. In the U.S., there are no laws or rules about circumcision so it is a choice for the parents. Before making the choice, parents should know about circumcision and talk it over with their doctor.

### What is Circumcision?

Boys are born with a hood of skin that covers the head of their penis. This is 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, but can also be performed in a pediatrician or primary care office. Circumcision of a newborn baby boy takes about 5 to 10 minutes. During a circumcision, the penis and foreskin are cleaned and the foreskin is then removed. To help reduce any discomfort during the procedure, and for several hours after the procedure, parents should talk with their doctor about pain relief choices for their baby. 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 can be given as well.

### What Happens After Circumcision?

Following circumcision, it is important to keep the area as clean as possible. Place petroleum jelly on a gauze pad and put it on the penis to keep the bandage from sticking or apply the petroleum jelly directly on the penis. This should be done with each diaper change until the penis is fully healed. If a plastic ring is used instead of a bandage, it should drop off within 5 to 8 days. In about 7 to 10 days, the penis should be fully healed. It is normal for

the tip of the penis to be red and for there to be a small amount of yellow fluid. To keep the circumcised area clean, use warm water. You can also use mild soap, but do not use diaper wipes.

### What are the Risks?

As you think about this choice, you may wonder if there are any risks. 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. 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.

### What are the Benefits?

Circumcision can 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 may slightly lower the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs), particularly in infancy. It can also lower the risk of getting some sexually transmitted diseases once they mature into adult males. Penile problems, such as pain, swelling, and infection, are also less common in boys and men that have been circumcised.



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### What about my Older Son?

Circumcision is similar for older boys and adults. When done later in life, the procedure will likely need to be done under general anesthesia, healing is likely to take longer and the risk of problems might be greater.

### Making the Decision

It is the parent's choice whether or not 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.

### About the Urology Care Foundation

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### Disclaimer:

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or healthcare provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications. For more information, visit **UrologyHealth.org/Download** or call 800-828-7866.

