



**Circumcision:**  
MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION  
FOR YOUR BABY

Parents want to make the best decisions for their child's health but when it comes to circumcision, that decision may not be easy. For some families, the choice is simple because it's based on cultural or religious beliefs. But for others, the right choice isn't as clear. This brochure will help you understand circumcision and some of the issues to think about. You can always talk to your doctor for more specific advice.

## What is circumcision?

Circumcision (ser-kūm-sizh-ūn) means 'to cut around'. It is a simple operation. Baby boys are born with a hood of skin, called the foreskin, covering the head of the penis. In circumcision, the foreskin is taken away, exposing the end of the penis.

Circumcision is usually done in the hospital on the first or second day after birth. It takes only about 5 to 10 minutes. A local anesthetic (an-es-thet-ik) is a numbing medicine that can be given to your baby, so he will not feel any pain.

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Some doctors do not agree about the benefits of circumcision. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) DOES NOT recommend circumcision as a routine procedure for every baby boy. Circumcision is a personal decision that is made by the parents.

## Make the decision before your baby is born!

If you want your baby circumcised, you should get it done before your baby leaves the hospital because it is a simple procedure done under local anesthetic.

If your child is older, the operation becomes more complicated and risky. It will most likely require general anesthesia (*a treatment that puts people to sleep so that they don't feel or remember anything during a procedure*) and may cause a lot of stress for your child. So it's a good idea to decide about circumcision before your baby is born so that you don't have to make the decision in a rush.

If your baby is born premature or have special medical problems, your doctor may delay the circumcision until your baby is ready to leave the hospital.

## Why DO parents want their babies circumcised?

- Many parents choose to circumcise for cultural or social reasons, or religious beliefs. Circumcision is more common in the US, Canada, and the Middle East than in Asia and other parts of the world.
- It is easier to keep a circumcised penis clean.
- Circumcised babies are less likely to have urinary tract infections (UTIs), especially in the first year of life.
- Circumcised babies are less likely to have problems with their penis such as irritation, inflammation, and infection.
- Circumcised men may also be at lower risk for penile cancer and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS.

## Why DON'T parents want their babies circumcised?

- Circumcision is a safe procedure but it has some risks just like any surgery. Bleeding and infection are the most common problems.
- Circumcision is not necessary to keep a penis clean. Boys can learn how to clean under the foreskin when they grow older.
- Circumcision is not a way of preventing sexually transmitted diseases. The most important way of preventing STDs is using condoms when you have sex.
- Circumcision may help prevent penile cancer but this disease is very rare in men, circumcised or not.

## How to care for your baby's penis after circumcision

- It usually takes between 7 to 10 days for the penis to heal. The tip may be swollen and red at first, and there may be a small amount of blood on the diaper. You may also notice a yellow fluid or crust after a couple of days.
- After circumcision, keep the area as clean as possible. Gently clean with water everyday and when the diaper becomes dirty. Do not use diaper wipes.
- You doctor may suggest putting petroleum jelly on your baby's penis to relieve any discomfort. Follow your doctor's suggestions.
- If there is a yellow medicated bandage on the penis, do not remove it. Let the bandage fall off on its own as the wound heals.

## Call your doctor right away if you notice any of the following:

- The wound keeps bleeding
- Your baby does not have a wet diaper within 6 to 8 hours after circumcision
- More redness
- Fever
- Increased swelling or fluid

## How to care for your baby's penis if he's not circumcised

- Washing the penis with soap and water helps lower the risk of problems or infections.
- Don't pull back the foreskin forcefully to clean beneath it because this can damage the penis. By age 5, most boys' foreskin can go back on its own so it can be pulled away easily. Then you can teach your son to gently pull the foreskin back and clean the skin underneath. He should wash his foreskin everyday while bathing.

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