

Facts About Circumcision

After the birth of a male child, parents must decide whether or not they want their son circumcised. Although circumcision is one of the most common operative procedures performed in American hospitals today, parents are often unsure about making this decision based on factual information.

- Is circumcision medically necessary?
- Is circumcision painful?
- What if I choose not to circumcise my son?

WHAT IS CIRCUMCISION?

Circumcision is the surgical removal of the skin that covers the end of the penis called the foreskin. After circumcision the tip of the penis (the glans) and the opening through which the baby urinates (the urethra) are exposed. The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a statement that circumcision is not medically necessary in newborns and only becomes medically necessary if certain conditions arise which would be treated by the removal of the foreskin. Therefore, circumcision is an elective procedure. Circumcision is often performed for religious, cultural or social reasons. The decision to circumcise or not is a personal one and should be made with some thought. Parents are encouraged to talk with their physician and make a decision after reviewing all of the information. If parents choose this option for their son, it is usually performed on the second day of life by the baby's doctor under sterile conditions in the nursery. There is a separate charge for circumcision based on the hospital costs for supplies and those of the physician performing the procedure.

REASONS PARENTS CHOOSE NOT TO CIRCUMCISE:

- 1.) Circumcision is a surgical procedure which carries some risk. Although uncommon, complications such as bleeding and local infection can result. On some rare occasions the foreskin may be cut too long, too short or unevenly. The circumcision may heal improperly or form adhesions involving residual foreskin.
- 2.) The foreskin is viewed as an important part of the body that is necessary for the protection of the penis. If the foreskin is removed, the exposed end may become irritated and cause the opening at the end of the penis to become too small, resulting in painful irritation.
- 3.) There is a belief that removal of the foreskin can desensitize the tip of the penis, resulting in decreased sexual pleasure later in life.

REASONS PARENTS CHOOSE TO CIRCUMCISE:

- 1.) Decreased chance of urinary tract infections in the first year of life.
- 2.) Although an extremely rare condition, chances of developing cancer of the penis is essentially eliminated in circumcised males.
- 3.) Slightly lower risk of getting and transmitting sexually transmitted diseases which may otherwise lead to cervical cancer in female partners.

REASONS PARENTS CHOOSE TO CIRCUMCISE (CONT.):

- 4.) Eliminates infections of the foreskin, which occur at a peak age of 3 to 5 years in uncircumcised males.
- 5.) Genital hygiene might be easier.
- 6.) Prevents a condition known as phimosis, which prevents the foreskin from being retracted.

IS CIRCUMCISION PAINFUL?

Many parents worry about their baby feeling pain during circumcision. Infants circumcised without the use of a local anesthetic will feel some pain. Some infants will continue to feel post operative discomfort which will be characterized by an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and fussy periods. A local anesthetic can be injected to cause a penile nerve block that has been shown to lower pain and stress in infants undergoing circumcision. Most infants do cry during circumcision, but calm down shortly after the procedure.



Wentworth-Douglass Hospital

WOMEN & CHILDREN'S CENTER

789 Central Ave., Dover, NH 03820

www.wdhospital.com / 603.742.5252