



Circumcision: Making Your Decision

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Information for parents

This pamphlet will assist you in answering some of the common questions you may have about circumcision. Since circumcision is not essential to a child's health, choose what is best for your baby by looking at the benefits and risks.

What is Circumcision?

- ▶ Your son's penis at birth has a protective covering of skin at the end of it. This tissue is called the foreskin. Circumcision surgically removes the foreskin, exposing the tip of the penis.

Reasons against circumcision:

- ▶ The Canadian Pediatric Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics do not recommend circumcision even though there may be some medical benefits
- ▶ There is pain during and after the procedure
- ▶ The majority of Canadian boys are not circumcised
- ▶ Possible problems with circumcision such as bleeding, infection, cutting the foreskin too short or too long, and improper healing
- ▶ The foreskin may help protect the tip of the penis. When removed, the tip of the penis may become irritated and cause the opening of the penis to become too small. This can cause urination problems that may need surgery
- ▶ Removing the foreskin may make the tip of the penis less sensitive, causing a decrease in sexual pleasure later in life
- ▶ Your son can be taught how to wash and clean his penis. This lowers his chances of getting infections, cancer of the penis, and sexually transmitted diseases
- ▶ Your son can always choose to be circumcised later in life

Reasons for circumcision:

- ▶ These may be for religious, cultural or family reasons
- ▶ It may be easier to clean your son's penis
- ▶ To have your son look like other men in your family
- ▶ There may be some medical benefits to circumcision. These include the following:
 - A slightly lower risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs). A circumcised infant boy has about a 1 in 1000 chance of having a UTI in the first year of life. If not circumcised, his chance of a UTI increases to 1 in 100
 - A lower risk of getting cancer of the penis. This type of cancer is very rare in both cases
 - A slightly lower risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, the AIDS virus
 - Prevention of foreskin infections
 - Prevention of phimosis, a condition in uncircumcised males that makes pulling the foreskin back impossible

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When is a circumcision done?

- ▶ Your baby must be healthy and big enough to safely be circumcised
- ▶ If you decide to have your son circumcised, it should be done in the days or weeks after birth

Is circumcision painful?

- ▶ Circumcision is painful if done without pain medicine
- ▶ The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends the use of pain medications

Can I be with my baby?

It may be beneficial for you to stay with your baby during the procedure. You may find it stressful as your baby may cry. Talk to your health care provider whether you can stay with your baby.

What problems can happen after circumcision?

- ▶ Problems after a circumcision are very rare
- ▶ The most common problems are persistent bleeding and infection
- ▶ Your baby may be fussier after the procedure

How do I care for my baby's penis?

- ▶ Your healthcare provider will give you a pamphlet that tells you how to care for your son's circumcised or uncircumcised penis

What does it cost?

- ▶ BC Women's Hospital does not provide circumcision service
- ▶ The cost of circumcision is not covered by provincial medical plans.
- ▶ Private clinics charge different rates. Call private clinics for information on what they charge.
- ▶ Consult your baby's doctor for a recommendation on where to have your baby circumcised.

Where do I get more information?

- ▶ Talk with your healthcare provider
- ▶ Look up information on the Canadian Pediatric Society web site, www.cps.ca, or the American Academy of Pediatrics web site www.aap.org
- ▶ Baby's Best Chance <http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/cpa/publications/babybestchance.pdf>

Please note: *The information in this pamphlet does not replace talking to your healthcare provider.*

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