

Circumcision Decision

For religious purposes, Muslims, Jewish, and some other groups have practiced circumcision for thousands of years. Circumcision became popular in the United States early in the 1900's, and by the end of World War II, the vast majority of men were circumcised. There has been a great deal of discussion about circumcision in medical and lay circles in recent years. Over 20 years ago, most physicians in the U.S. felt circumcision was indicated and urged patients to have it done in the newborn period. Now, it is considered more elective, and about half of boys are circumcised in the U.S.

Uncircumcised Penis Care

In a newborn and beyond, the uncircumcised penis needs no special care. During routine bathing, the penis and foreskin need to be washed with no special attention. The foreskin needs to be retracted as far as it goes very easily with no discomfort, which in a newborn and the first few years of life is not very far. Natural oils and shedding of dead skin sometimes form little white, cottage cheese-type secretions that may come out from under the foreskin in chunks. These lumps and the little pockets under the foreskin they come from are normal and should cause no particular concern. There is no need to have the foreskin pulled back by first grade, or any other arbitrary age. Pretty much left alone, the uncircumcised penis will do fine.

Risks and Benefits of Circumcision

There is some evidence that circumcised men are less apt to get urinary tract infections than uncircumcised men and that they may be less likely to catch and transmit sexually transmitted diseases (especially HIV). Foreskin infections can be more common in men who are uncircumcised, as can be HPV and Penile cancer (although this is rare to begin with).

Nevertheless, circumcision is a procedure, and it carries small risks – risk of pain, infection, bleeding, deformity or poor cosmetic result, damage to surrounding structures, or need for repeat procedures. We use a local anesthetic and sucrose solution for anesthesia, but circumcision causes some pain or discomfort and some babies may be fussy for a day or two afterwards. We usually do not advise giving Tylenol before the procedure. The least expensive time to do a circumcision is in the newborn period; if you miss the “newborn window” most urologists will not do a circumcision until after 1 year of age which requires general anesthesia (“being put to sleep”) which is more risky. *Most providers will NOT perform a circumcision on a newborn who has not received the IM vitamin K shot shortly after birth, so please keep this in mind.*

I will do a circumcision usually after the baby is at least 24 hours old and up to three to four weeks of age (ideally when the baby is less than 10 pounds and in the first 1-2 weeks of life – really as soon as possible!) We do this in the clinic and it takes about 30 minutes. Medi-Cal and some insurances do not cover the cost of circumcision, so please check with your plan about your coverage and the cost. If done as a sliding fee, the cost is somewhere between \$100-250 (cash, credit card) **which is due at the time of the procedure**. Please bring a pacifier and a thin receiving blanket to your appointment, as this will assist us during the procedure.

After Circumcision Care

After circumcision, the Vaseline gauze needs to be unwrapped and removed in about 24 hours. Urination is not impeded. The diaper may be kept lightly lubricated with a little Vaseline or Neosporin ointment with diaper changes for 2-3 days. If the diaper sticks to the penis, wet a cotton ball with warm water and wipe it free. No other special attention is necessary. Light bleeding leaving a spot in the diaper is fairly common in the first day. If there is bleeding, please hold pressure to the area and call if concerned. There will be penile swelling, and a yellow-white crust or membrane over the cut edge. After about a week, there should be no discharge or bleeding and the circumcision should look pretty well healed. The underside of the penis is usually the last to heal. If there is redness going down the shaft of the penis onto the abdomen, fever, a rash with blisters, heavy bleeding, no urination in 12 hours, or the baby's behavior changes remarkably, let us know.