

Parent Information & Considerations:

After the birth of a male infant, parents are asked whether they would like their infant circumcised. Circumcision is the surgical removal of all or part of the foreskin covering the end of the penis. A decision to circumcise or not to circumcise a newborn male is a personal choice. Most newborn circumcisions are done for traditional, cultural or religious reasons but even this choice should not be made without careful thought. We encourage you to read the following information and discuss your decision with knowledgeable advisers; your obstetrician or midwife; and your child's pediatrician.

Reasons to Choose to have a Circumcision

1. Custom - In the United States, circumcision of the male infant is most commonly done by custom. Many parents feel it is important that their child "looks like his father," or peers.
2. Cleanliness - Circumcision does make cleanliness of the penis easier. A normal secretion, which is cream colored and somewhat waxy, is formed under the intact foreskin. If allowed to accumulate, it can irritate the head of the penis and may lead to an infection. Circumcision prevents this but the build-up can also be prevented by proper hygiene during bathing. Circumcision does not eliminate the need for proper hygiene; though it does make it easier.
3. Decreased incidence of infection - Circumcision will slightly reduce the risk of urinary tract infections in males, both as infants and also in adulthood. The incidence of such infections in the first year of life is reduced from 1 in 100 (hundred) to 1 in 1000 (thousand). Circumcision has also been shown to be associated with a lower risk for some sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, particularly in areas where the use of safe sexual practices is low
4. Prevention of paraphimosis - Rarely, parents may retract a still-tight foreskin while vigorously cleansing the penis to eliminate the waxy secretion mentioned above. If the foreskin is left retracted, it can act as a tourniquet, decreasing blood supply to the tip of the penis. This may need to be surgically corrected. Circumcision prevents this uncommon complication from occurring.
5. Prevention of cancer of the penis - This is an extremely rare condition of adult-life. It is less common in circumcised men and is usually found only in conditions of very poor hygiene, suggesting that proper hygiene provides as much protection as circumcision.
6. It is important to note that 1 in 100 uncircumcised adults may require a circumcision for medical reasons.

Reasons to Choose NOT to have a Circumcision

1. Pain - Research and common sense lead to the conclusion that, in the absence of some form of analgesia (local pain medicine), the infant experiences pain during the procedure. There are medications available that diminish or eliminate pain, which are both safe and effective. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that these be used. **We practice gentle circumcision and use topical numbing medication as well as injectable lidocaine to completely numb the area. We also provide soothing white noise and a private room to comfort your baby after the procedure. After the procedure parents may give their baby infant Tylenol at the appropriate dose to alleviate any post-procedure discomfort. Combined, these techniques allow your baby to have the most gentle procedure and recovery.**
2. Surgical risk - The vast majority of circumcisions are performed without any complications whatsoever. However, no surgical procedure (and circumcision is a surgical procedure) can be totally risk-free. Complications include: bleeding, infection, adhesion formation, cosmetic deformity, trauma to the penis, excessive removal of the foreskin, and functional defects. These occur approximately once every 500 circumcisions.
3. Change in sensation - Some believe that circumcision leads to a decrease in sexual pleasure later in life. There is insufficient data to substantiate this belief.
4. Expense - There is a cost attached to the procedure. Some health insurance plans do not provide coverage for circumcision. If you have concerns about your coverage, we urge you to contact your insurer before the procedure is performed, as parents will be responsible for charges.

Timing of circumcisions: Although parents have the option of delaying circumcision beyond the newborn period, these "delayed" circumcisions represent a more involved surgical procedure. At our practice, circumcision is performed within the first 21 days of life.

Finally, the Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Circumcision concluded that, "...existing scientific evidence demonstrates potential medical benefits of newborn male circumcision; however, these data are not sufficient to recommend routine neonatal circumcision [and] ...parents should determine what is in the best interest of their child." The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists supports this: **"We support the conclusion that parents are the best judges of the appropriateness or lack of appropriateness of circumcision for their children."**