

**Circumcision**

Worldwide about 85% of babies are not circumcised. In Canada, the rate has decreased to about 40%.

For some parents, circumcision has deep religious significance and the procedure is central to establishing a newborn boy’s identity. Other parents choose to circumcise their sons for social reasons. Often parents want their son to “look like them”. Your choice is personal and needs to be made with as much information as possible. The following is meant to provide parents with information that will enable them to make the best decision possible.

Circumcision is a surgical procedure that removes the layer of skin (foreskin or prepuce) away from the head (glans) of the penis and part of the shaft.

In the 1970s circumcision was deemed to be not medically necessary by the Canadian and American Academies of Pediatricians. Currently, the Canadian Pediatric Society does not recommend routine circumcision for newborn babies and the procedure is an out of pocket expense to the parents.

Risks and Benefits of Circumcision

 Circumcised Boys

* 1 in 1000 chance of a urinary tract infection
* 1 in 1 million occurrence of penile cancer
* prevention of a necessary circumcision later in life, which is more painful and risky- 1% risk
* 2-3% of babies will have a surgical complication, like infection or bleeding
* .2-.3% will have a more serious complication, like having had too much skin removed
* 1% may need to be re-circumcised due to a poor result.
* Very rarely, anesthetic complications can arise

Uncircumcised boys

* 7 in 1000 chance of urinary tract infection
* 1% risk of needing a circumcision later on in life
* 3 in 1 million chance of developing penile cancer

Circumcisions are performed in the first few weeks of life to healthy, full term babies. They can take place in the hospital or in a doctor’s office. Your midwife can advise you as to how to obtain a circumcision for your baby. There is a cost involved ($150.00-$250.00) and a consent form must be signed.

The baby is placed on a board or molded tray on his back. His arms and legs are restrained. The foreskin is separated from the glans with a type of forceps. Clamps hold the foreskin in place, a protective cover is put over the glans, (usually a metal bell or plastic ring) the foreskin is pulled over the cover and then about one third to one half of the skin is cut off using a clamp. The cover placed on the glans remains there for about five to ten days and falls off by itself. Antiseptic petroleum jelly is placed on the penis to prevent irritation and infection.

All babies can feel pain and it is recommended that they receive pain relief prior to being circumcised. Ask the doctor you have chosen to perform the circumcision if she/he uses analgesia prior to the surgery. The three primary forms of pain relief are topical numbing cream, a local anesthetic injected into the penis or another local anesthetic that goes under the skin. All three are considered to be safe for babies.

The most common complication with circumcision is excessive bleeding, damage to the penis and infection. Very rarely does the circumcision need to be repeated.

Caring for your baby’s penis is important whether he is circumcised or not. It is important to keep the area clean. If your baby is circumcised you should watch for signs of infection, bleeding and healing. An uncircumcised penis needs to be kept clean as well. Parents should know that their son’s foreskin will separate from the glans on its own and they don’t need to do anything to make that happen. Boys have natural secretions to clean this area and soap and water will be enough to keep their child clean and the foreskin does not need to be retracted to ensure cleanliness. By about three years of age 90% of boys will have fully retractable foreskins.

Some things to consider;

* Risk of infection decreases with good hygiene habits
* Less and less boys are being circumcised and therefore they will not be different than everyone else
* There are no studies that prove circumcised males have decreased sexual sensitivity
* Babies cannot consent to this procedure