

What is circumcision?

Circumcision is surgically removing part of a person's genitals, usually the protective skin - the foreskin in boys, and the clitoris hood in girls. Only a small percentage of people in the world do this (to boys more than girls), and they do it at all different ages. Circumcision is done for cultural rather than medical reasons. It's a cosmetic surgery.

In the USA, circumcision means cutting off part of a newborn boy's penis. After injecting numbing medicine, a metal clamp, scissors, and a knife are used to pull the foreskin off the end of the penis and cut it away. When the medicine wears off, the baby has pain until the wound heals in a few days. The surgery costs around \$250.

Even when everything goes well, surgery can have complications that could require more treatment. Possible complications include bleeding, infection, reaction to anesthetic, and improper healing that might require more surgery. Complications are rare, but they can be serious, and they can occur even when the surgery is performed perfectly.

Babies do not need circumcision, and it should not be performed without the parents' informed consent.

Questions & answers:

Why not circumcise newborn boys?

1. It's unnecessary. There are no medical benefits.
2. It's harmful. The risks and harm to the baby, of unnecessary surgery, outweigh any potential cosmetic benefits to the adults.
3. It's permanent.

Why leave the foreskin alone?

1. It's healthy. The foreskin of the penis, like the hood of the clitoris, is protective, and sexually sensitive. That's why it's there.
2. It's normal. It's how most men and boys around the world look.
3. It's fair. The boy can choose for himself how he wants his penis to look and feel, when he gets older.

Why does anybody get their baby circumcised?

1. Family pressure. In the old days it was thought circumcision prevented disease, and a lot of older people still think this.
2. Unfamiliarity. Some people don't know what a normal intact penis looks like.
3. Doctors. Sometimes it's not discussed in detail, and a doctor assumes it's what the parents will want – or the parents assume it's what the doctor thinks is best. Parents and doctors need to make sure they're on the same page.

What if my baby boy is not circumcised?

Only one answer: Leave it be! In babies, the foreskin is normally stuck to the penis, so don't let anyone try to stretch it out or pull it back. It will loosen up by itself as he gets older. It doesn't need any special care, other than the usual diaper-changing care a girl would get. Remember, the male foreskin and the female hood are basically the same! If you wouldn't mess with one, don't mess with the other.