

## Risks of circumcision

- For 1 in 500 circumcisions there may be either a little bleeding – easily stopped by pressure or, less commonly, requiring stitches (1 in 1000), the need for repeat surgery (1 in 1000), or a generalized infection that will require antibiotics (1 in 4000). Although there can be a local infection, often what seems like a local infection is actually part of the normal healing process.
- Serious complications (requiring hospitalization) are rare – approximately 1 in 5000.
- Mutilation or loss of the penis, and death, is virtually unheard of with circumcisions performed by a competent medical practitioner. Ensure your doctor is experienced.
- If a bleeding disorder such as *hemophilia* runs in the family, then the doctor needs to be advised as circumcision may require special preoperative treatment.
- *Anesthetic* is imperative, preferably a local, since a general anaesthetic carries risks, and is unnecessary. For age 0-4 months a local, *not general*, and for older children or teenagers a mild sedative might be considered in addition to the local. Young children who wriggle can be gently restrained. For pain after the anesthetic wears off, an oral analgesic medication is often prescribed.
- Delay means *stitches* being used for circumcision of older children, teenagers and men.
- So if circumcision is delayed past 4 months, total cost will become increasingly greater.

## In conclusion

*Circumcision confers a lifetime of medical benefits. 1 in 3 uncircumcised boys will develop a condition requiring medical attention. This means various degrees of suffering and some deaths. In contrast, risk of an easily-treatable condition during a circumcision is 1 in 500, and of a true complication is 1 in 5000. A successful circumcision is very unlikely to have any long-term adverse consequences.*

***Thus, benefits exceed moderate risks by over a hundred to one!***

## Further information

may be obtained from the following web sites.  
<http://www.circinfo.net> (Dr. Morris)  
<http://www.medicirc.org> (Dr. Schoen)  
<http://www.gilgalsoc.org> (The Gilgal Society)  
<http://www.aboutcirc.info> (Dr. Cox)  
<http://www.circumcision.com.au> (Dr. Russell)  
<http://www.circumcisioninfo.com> (Dr. Lacock)  
<http://www.samkuninmd.com> (Dr. Kunin)  
<http://www.geocities.com/HotSprings/2754> (Mr. Cormier)

## Authors

The text of this brochure has received consensus support from the following experts on circumcision who contributed to its formulation:

Edgar Schoen, MD (Oakland) \*  
Tom Wiswell, MD (Florida)  
Sam Kunin, MD (Los Angeles)  
Howard Stang, MD (Minnesota)  
Daniel Halperin, PhD (San Francisco)  
Stefan Bailis, MA (Minnesota)  
Mike Cormier (Canada).

\*Dr Schoen was for many years the Chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Circumcision.

Primary author: Brian Morris, DSc  
Professor, School of Medical Sciences, University of Sydney.

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The Gilgal Society

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Published in England by  
The Gilgal Society  
PO Box 53515  
London SE19 2TX

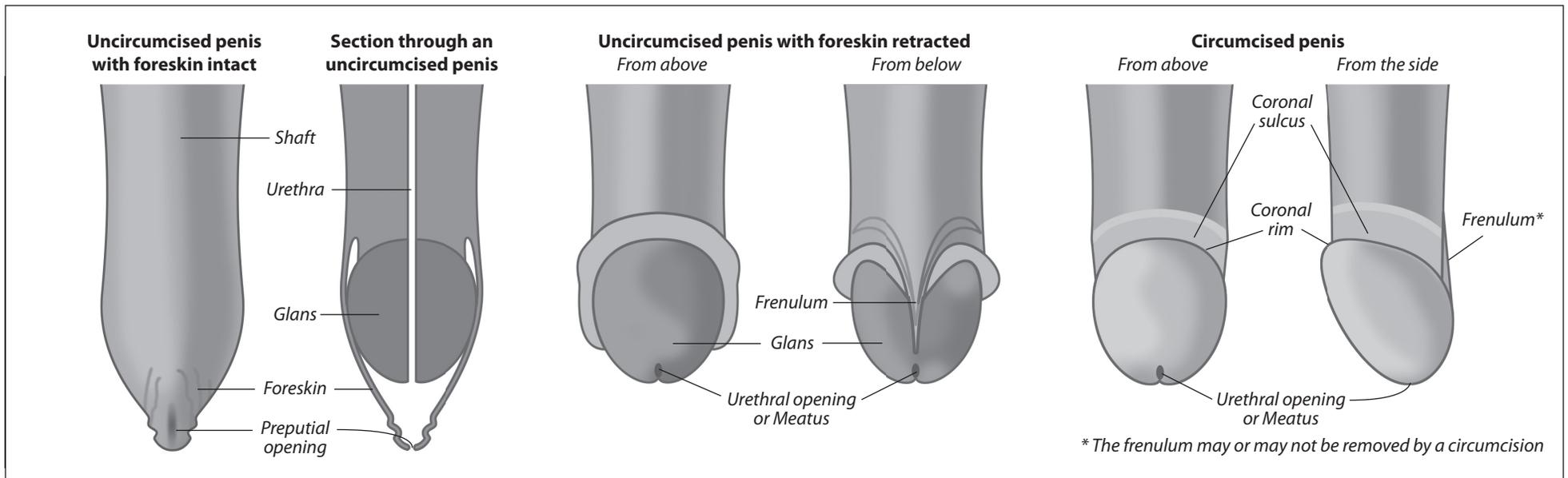
GFP-EN(US) 0606-2

# Circumcision: *A guide for parents*



Circumcision is a simple surgical procedure that removes the foreskin – a sleeve of skin covering the head of the penis. Parents have the legal right to authorize circumcision. In order to make an informed decision, they must carefully consider the benefits and risks.

Since the foreskin traps bacteria and other infectious agents, as well as accumulating malodorous smegma, its removal improves *genital hygiene* and reduces risk of diseases and other conditions over the lifetime for the boy and his future sexual partners.



## History

Circumcision has been performed for thousands of years as part of the culture of indigenous people who live in hot environments such as in Australia, the Pacific Islands, equatorial countries, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. In the USA 80-90% of White and Black males are circumcised, mostly soon after birth. Although the rate is low amongst Hispanics this rises as subsequent generations adopt local American practices. The overall rate of newborn circumcisions in the USA has been increasing steadily every year since the late 80s, and this is seen in all racial/ethnic groups. In Canada the circumcision rate is around 35%.

## Benefits of circumcision

- Eliminates the risk of *phimosis*, which affects 1 in 10 older boys and men. This condition refers to a tight foreskin that cannot be pulled back fully, so making cleaning under it, and passing urine, difficult. Phimosis also greatly increases the risk of penile cancer, and is the cause of foreskin and catheter problems in nursing homes.
- Reduces by 3-fold the risk of *inflammation* and *infection* of the skin of the penis. One in 10 uncircumcised men get inflammation of the head of the penis and foreskin. This rises to 1 in 3 if the uncircumcised man is diabetic. (Diabetic men also

have other severe problems.) In contrast only 2% of circumcised men get this condition.

- Over 10-fold decrease in risk of *urinary tract infections* in infants. Whereas risk of this is only 1 in 500 for a circumcised boy, 1 in 50 uncircumcised male infants will get a urinary tract infection. This very painful condition is particularly dangerous in infancy, and in 40% of cases can lead to kidney inflammation and disease; blood poisoning and meningitis can also result.
- Over 20-fold decrease in risk of invasive *penile cancer*, which has a high fatality rate. One in 600 uncircumcised men get penile cancer, which often requires penile amputation.
- Uncircumcised men have 1½ – 2 times the risk of *prostate cancer*, which affects 1 in 6.
- Reduces by approximately 3-fold the risk of getting *HIV (AIDS)*, during sex with an infected woman. HIV enters via the vulnerable inner lining of the foreskin of a healthy penis, but can also infect via sores anywhere on the penis (caused for example by genital herpes). In countries such as the USA that have a low prevalence of HIV the risk of a heterosexual man being infected with HIV sexually is generally low. His risk, especially if uncircumcised, will be much greater if he engages

in unsafe sex with people of countries in which HIV abounds.

- Circumcision also affords substantial protection against sexually transmitted infections such as *papilloma (wart) virus*, *syphilis* and *chancroid*.
- Circumcision reduces by up to 5 times the risk of the man's female partner being infected by *chlamydia* or getting *cervical cancer* (which is caused by human papillomavirus). The load of infectious bacteria and viruses that accumulate under the foreskin is delivered into the female genital tract during sex. Chlamydia has more than doubled over the past 5 years and can cause *infertility* (in both sexes), *pelvic inflammatory disease*, and *ectopic pregnancy*.
- If not circumcised soon after birth, up to 10% will later require one anyway for medical reasons.
- Credible research shows that most women prefer the *appearance* of the circumcised penis. They also prefer it for sexual activity. Hygiene is one reason.
- Most studies reveal no significant difference in sensitivity between a circumcised and uncircumcised penis.
- In general, sexual function is the same or better.