



For more information, check out these websites:

When you reach either of the following websites, type “**circumcision**” in the **Search** box in the upper right corner of the screen.

www.ihc.com

This site provides information produced by IHC, as well as health information from other trusted sources.

www.medem.com

This site includes award-winning clinical content from America’s leading medical societies.

CIRCUMCISION—It’s Your Choice

Circumcision is a surgical procedure in which the skin covering the end of the penis is removed. Except where circumcision is a religious custom, the United States is the only country where routine circumcision of male newborns is common. However, this is changing. This document gives you information and resources to help you decide whether to circumcise your baby boy.

Circumcision is no longer considered medically necessary. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association, there is not enough medical evidence to support routine circumcision. Studies do show some potential medical benefits of circumcision, but there are also potential risks (see the table at the bottom of the page). Since circumcision is not essential to the child’s current well-being, parents should determine what is in the best interest of their child.

Whether or not to have your son circumcised is YOUR choice. In addition to weighing potential medical benefits and risks, you should also consider any cultural, religious, or ethnic traditions that may affect your decision. To learn more, ask your health care providers—and visit one of the websites listed to the left. Make sure you have the information you need to make an informed choice.

You may have to pay for your son’s circumcision. Because routine circumcision is not considered medically necessary, your health care insurance may not pay for it. In fact, **both Utah and Idaho Medicaid no longer pay for circumcision.** You should check with your own insurance provider before you make a choice. Also, talk with hospital or clinic staff, if needed, for information on costs and financial assistance.

Potential Benefits

- **Reduced risk for bladder infection in the 1st year of life.** The risk is 1 in 1,000 for circumcised boys, and 1 in 100 for boys who are not circumcised.
- **Slightly reduced risk of developing cancer of the penis.** 1 out of 1,000,000 circumcised men will develop cancer of the penis. This may be slightly more common in males who are not circumcised who do not practice good hygiene.
- **Slightly reduced risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), possibly including HIV.** However, behavioral factors are far more important in preventing these diseases than the presence or absence of a foreskin.
- **Easier genital hygiene and prevention of infection under the foreskin.** However, boys who are not circumcised can learn how to clean beneath the foreskin.

Potential Risks

- **Bleeding, infection, and improper healing.** These are risks of any surgery.
- **Cutting the foreskin too short or too long.** If too little skin is removed, the circumcision may have to be repeated. If too much skin is removed, the penis can take longer to heal, or may require reconstructive surgery.
- **Irritation and urination problems.** When the foreskin is removed, the tip of the penis may become irritated and cause the opening of the penis to become too small. In rare cases, this can cause urination problems that may need to be surgically corrected.

©2003 INTERMOUNTAIN HEALTH CARE Clinical Education Services.

The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

Clinical Education Services (801) 442-2963 (8-05)