

Circumcision (child)

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is a circumcision?

A circumcision is an operation to remove the foreskin (the skin that covers the sensitive tip of the penis).

Why is a circumcision performed?

Circumcisions are usually recommended only for the following medical reasons.

- Balanitis xerotica obliterans (BXO), which is an uncommon condition where the foreskin becomes thickened and white
- A non-retractile foreskin, where you are unable to pull back the foreskin
- Paraphimosis, where the foreskin cannot be returned over the tip of the penis after it has been pulled back
- Infections of the foreskin
- Abnormal urinary tract with urinary infection that keeps coming back

Are there any alternatives to a circumcision?

If BXO is suspected, a circumcision is the only dependable way to cure the condition.

When BXO is not suspected, a non-retractile foreskin can often be treated with steroid creams.

If your child does not have BXO, an operation involving a single slit or multiple slits (a preputioplasty) may be recommended. This operation involves widening the opening of the foreskin but not removing it. For preputioplasty to be successful, your child needs to pull back their foreskin every day up to 6 weeks after the operation.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes about an hour. During the operation your surgeon will remove the foreskin and seal off any small blood vessels. They will stitch the two edges of skin together.

What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

General complications of any operation

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication

Specific complications of this operation

- Difficulty passing urine
- Developing an ulcer at the tip of the penis
- Narrowing of the opening of the urethra
- Too much foreskin is removed
- Not enough foreskin is removed
- Damage to the urethra
- Injury to the end of the penis
- Cosmetic problems
- Scar tissue
- Developing an epidermal inclusion cyst (a lump under the skin filled with a waxy whitish substance)

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Unsightly scarring of the skin

How soon will my child recover?

He should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

The penis may look sore, swollen and bruised.

It is usual for children to return to school after 7 to 10 days.

Summary

A circumcision is an operation to remove the foreskin.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

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