

## Circumcision and Penis Care

### What is circumcision?

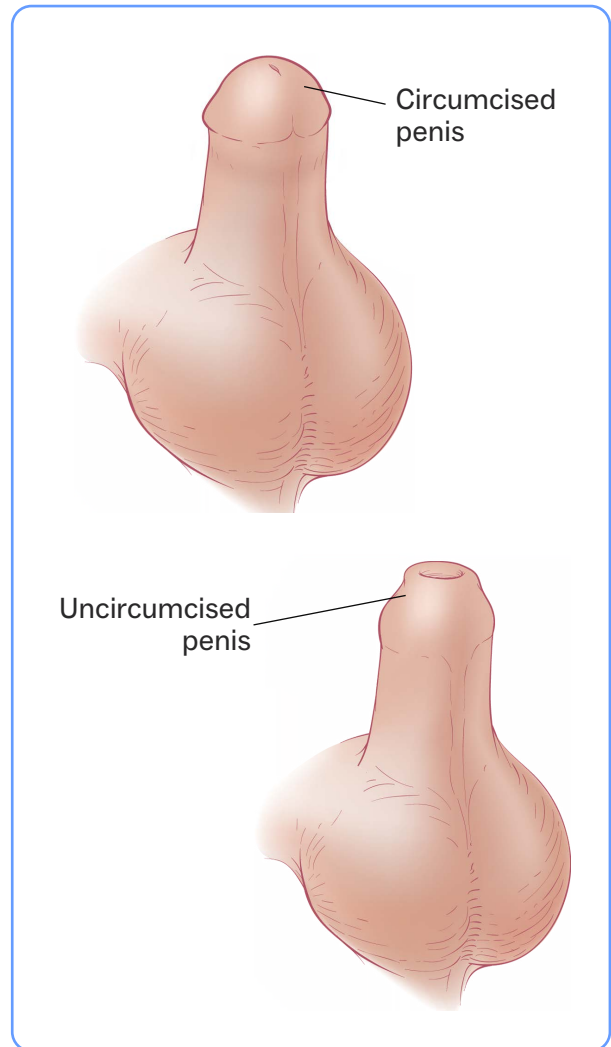
Circumcision is a surgery to remove a fold of skin (the foreskin) from the tip (glans) of the penis. Boys are born with this skin fold. In circumcision, the foreskin is removed, exposing the tip of the penis.

### How do I decide if my son should have a circumcision or not?

It is important for you to know that circumcision is not necessary, but it's also not harmful to a boy's health. The American Academy of Pediatrics (the organization of children's doctors) does not recommend for or against circumcision. For some families, the choice is simple because of their culture or religion. For others, the right option is not as clear. Before you decide, talk with your child's doctor and consider some of the issues and the risks and benefits of having the procedure performed. That will allow you to make the best choice for your child and family.

### What are some pros and cons of circumcision?

- Circumcised infants are less likely to get a urinary tract infection (UTI) in the first year of life. After the first year, the UTI risk is about the same for circumcised and uncircumcised boys.
- Circumcised adults may have less risk for cancer of the penis. But this cancer is rare in the U.S., regardless of whether they are circumcised.
- It is easier to keep a circumcised penis clean.
- Circumcision may help defend against getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like HIV, which causes AIDS.
- Circumcision does not make the tip of the penis more or less sensitive. Nor does it decrease or increase sexual pleasure later in life.



### What are the possible risks or complications of circumcision?

Complications of newborn circumcision are not common. One in 200 to one in 500 circumcisions may have a complication. Your child's doctor can easily treat both of the most frequent complications which are:

- Minor bleeding
- Local infection

## What other risks or complications should I consider?

It is possible that the circumcision site may reattach to the tip of the penis. If this occurs, it may require minor surgery to correct the problem. To prevent reattachment, the doctor will apply petroleum jelly to the entire penis after the procedure and may use a gauze wrap.

**You can help prevent this by following the directions for using petroleum jelly in the section “How do I care for my child at home.”**

Another risk or complication is too little or too much skin is removed, although this is rare.

- 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.

If you decide to have your child circumcised, it is generally best to have the operation in the first 4 weeks of life. Circumcision is more complicated as a child gets older.

For these reasons, your child’s doctor may delay the procedure or decide not to do it at all:

- Premature or medically unstable babies are not circumcised until they are ready to leave the hospital.
- Babies born with penis physical abnormalities that need surgery are often not circumcised. This is because the foreskin may be used for the reconstruction surgery.

## What about pain?

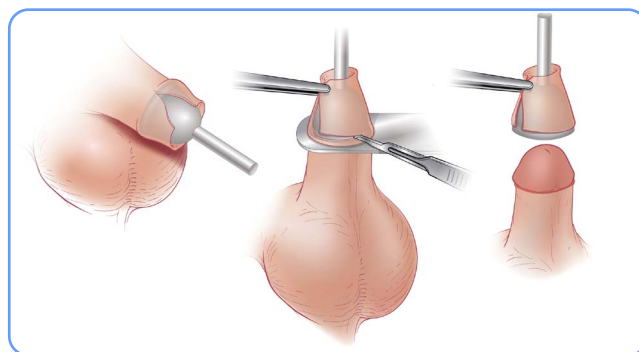
Newborn babies feel pain. Circumcision can be painful. Most doctors use a local anesthetic which can greatly reduce your baby’s discomfort. If you decide to circumcise your child, talk with their doctor about pain management.

Your child may be given a pacifier dipped in a sweet solution to help relieve pain and reduce their level of stress (and yours). Your child will also be secured in a padded restraint device. Used together, these can decrease discomfort by more than half.

## How is the circumcision done?

### If your child is circumcised with the Gomco method:

- The doctor clamps the Gomco device to your child’s foreskin. This holds the foreskin away from the glans and protects the glans during the procedure. The foreskin is removed.
- The doctor takes the Gomco device off and covers the incision with antibiotic ointment and a gauze bandage coated with petroleum jelly.



### How do I care for my child at home?

- Do not put your child in a bath tub until 24 hours after surgery.
- Your child’s penis may have a soft, yellow scab for a few days. This is normal. Do not remove the scab, but do wash it gently.
- If your child has a gauze bandage on their incision, you might need to put on a new one with each diaper change. Do this for 1 or 2 days after the procedure before removing it. **Put petroleum jelly on the gauze so it will not stick to the skin.**
  - On rare occasions, a bandage may be used because of more serious bleeding. If this is the case, please discuss next steps with your child’s doctor.
- **2 days after the procedure, put petroleum jelly all over the tip and shaft of the penis. Do this at every diaper change for 10 to 14 days.**

Applying petroleum jelly will help prevent:

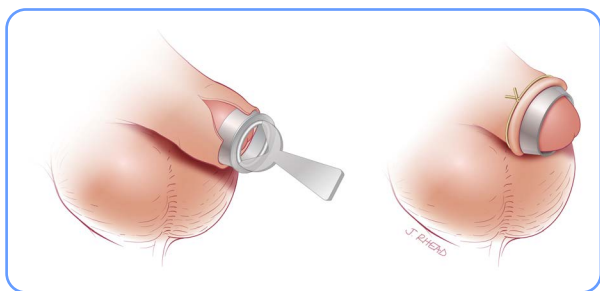
- Skin from the shaft of the penis sticking to the tip.
- The diaper or underwear sticking to the wound.

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- **About 5 to 7 days after the procedure and when the surgical wound has healed**, put petroleum jelly all over the tip of the penis and in the groove just beneath the tip. You may need to gently push the skin of the penis toward the body. This helps the tip to pop out and be seen. **If you are unable to see the groove just beneath the tip, the skin may be getting stuck in place and you should call your child's pediatrician.**
- It usually takes 7 to 10 days for the penis to heal completely.

### **If your child is circumcised with the Plastibell method:**

- The doctor puts the Plastibell device on the penis. The Plastibell device clamps the foreskin edge as it heals then slowly detaches from the penis.
- Your child will go home with this plastic cap in place. It will have a string tied around it to secure it in place.



### **How do I care for my child at home?**

- Bathe your child as usual.
- The string and cap will normally fall off by itself in 5 to 8 days. **Call your doctor if it has not fallen off in 10 to 12 days.**
  - A section of the cap may come loose before the other section. This is okay. If this happens, gently place the plastic cap back over the penis until the cap falls off completely.
  - Sometimes, the string holding the foreskin to the Plastibell will fall off. If this happens, look for signs of bleeding and call your doctor.

- After the Plastibell has fallen off, put petroleum jelly on the entire tip of penis. Gently retract the remaining skin and put petroleum jelly into the groove just beneath the tip. You may need to use a cotton swab to do this. Do this at every diaper change for 10 to 14 days.

**If you are unable to see the groove just beneath the tip, then the skin may be getting stuck in place and you should call your child's pediatrician.**

Applying petroleum jelly will help prevent:

- Skin from the shaft of the penis sticking to the tip.
- The diaper or underwear sticking to the wound.

### **How do I keep my son's penis clean?**

Whether you choose circumcision or not, it is important to frequently clean your child's penis. Wash the penis with soap and warm water when bathing your child. You do not need to use cotton swabs, astringents, or any special bath products.

With an uncircumcised child, never forcibly pull back the foreskin to clean beneath it. Instead, gently tense the foreskin against the tip of the penis and wash off any **smegma** (the whitish "beads" of dead skin cells mixed with the body's natural oil). Over time, the foreskin will retract on its own so it can be slipped back over the glans toward the body. This happens at different times for different children, but most can retract their foreskins by the time they are 5 years old.

## When should I call the doctor?

Watch for the following signs or symptoms that may need medical attention:

- Persistent bleeding. Smaller blood spots in the diaper are okay, but a spot that is larger or bright red should be checked.
- Redness around the tip of the penis that gets worse after 3 days.
- Fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- Signs of infection, such as the presence of pus-filled blisters.
- Unable to urinate (pee) normally 6 to 8 hours after the circumcision.
- Skin edges that are separated more than ¼ inch.
- Skin from the shaft of the penis seems to be sticking to the head, and you can't easily push it back and see the entire head of the penis.

If you notice any of these signs or symptoms, call your child's doctor right away. Almost all problems related to circumcision are easily treated if they are taken care of right away.

## Notes

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