

Circumcision of baby boys is an optional surgical procedure to remove the layer of skin (the foreskin) that covers the head (glans) of the penis. It is most often done during the first few days after birth but can also be performed in the first 6 weeks of life. Parents who decide to circumcise their newborn boys often do so for religious, social, or cultural reasons. If you are trying to make a decision about circumcision, feel free to talk us or your family doctor. Ask for up-to-date information about the potential medical benefits and risks of circumcision. The Canadian Paediatric Society does not recommend routine circumcision of every newborn boy.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF CIRCUMCISION

A few studies suggest that boys who have been circumcised may be:

- Less likely to develop cancer of the penis later in life, although this form of cancer is extremely rare.
- Less likely to get HIV and HPV infections.
- Less likely to get a urinary tract (bladder or kidney) infection during childhood.

Also, female partners of men who have been circumcised are less likely to get cervical cancer.

POTENTIAL RISKS OF CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision is a painful procedure. Problems resulting from the surgery are usually minor. Although serious complications are very rare, they do occur. These can include:

- Infection or too much bleeding.
- Damage to the penis or surrounding tissue or removing too much skin from the penis.
- Side effects from the pain relief medicine.

The risk of complications is lower in young babies than in older children or adults. To minimize the risks, the procedure should be done by a trained and experienced practitioner using a sterile technique. Someone should follow up with you in the days after the procedure to make sure that bleeding has not increased.

CARING FOR AN UNCIRCUMCISED PENIS

The foreskin covers the head (glans) of a boy's penis. During the early years of a boy's life, the foreskin starts to separate from the glans but may not be fully retractable (or pulled back) until a boy is 3 to 5 years old or even later. This is a natural process that occurs over time. You do not need to do anything to make it happen.

An uncircumcised penis is easy to keep clean and requires no special care.

- Keep your baby's penis clean by gently washing the area during his bath. Do not try to pull back the foreskin. Never force it.
- When your son is old enough, teach him to keep his penis clean as you're teaching him how to keep the rest of his body clean.
- When the foreskin separates, skin cells will be shed and new ones will develop to replace them. These dead skin cells will work their way down the penis through the tip of the foreskin and may look like white, cheesy lumps. This is called smegma. If you see this under the skin, you don't need to force it out. Just wipe the smegma away once it comes out.
- When the foreskin is fully retractable, teach your son to wash underneath it each day.

IF YOU DECIDE TO HAVE YOUR BABY BOY CIRCUMCISED

In Canada, most circumcisions are done by medical practitioners or skilled providers. Talk to your baby's health care provider about the issues involved in circumcision:

- Cost: newborn circumcisions are not covered by any provincial or territorial health plans.
- Possible complications, as outlined above.
- Pain relief: newborn babies feel pain. The practitioner performing the circumcision should use some type of local anesthetic, given by a needle, in the area where the circumcision is done; additional methods of relieving pain include sucking on a pacifier dipped in a sugar solution, topical anesthetic

cream, and acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol). Anesthetics carry risks and the needle or creams can cause bruising, redness, or swelling.

- A circumcision would not be recommended if your baby has a health problem which increases the risk of complications after circumcision.

CARING FOR A CIRCUMCISED PENIS

- After the circumcision, you can comfort your baby by holding him and breastfeeding him often.
- The penis will take 7 to 10 days to heal. The area may be red for a few days and you may see some yellow discharge, which should decrease as it heals. Talk to your baby's healthcare provider about what to expect.
- Follow the instructions given by the practitioner who did the circumcision about caring for the dressing, using petroleum jelly, keeping the area clean, and bathing.
- Call your healthcare provider if:
 - You see persistent bleeding at any time during the healing process.
 - The redness or swelling around the circumcision does not start to go down in 48 hours.
 - Your baby develops a fever (a rectal temperature of 38.0°C or higher).
 - Your baby seems to be unwell.
 - Your baby does not pass urine within 12 hours of the procedure.
 - There is a greenish or foul smelling discharge from the penis.

As mentioned above, only certain healthcare providers offer circumcisions. The following doctors will perform the procedure, although there are other available options as well. All have various preferences regarding the method of circumcision, age at which the procedure is performed, pain relievers during the procedure, associated cost, etc.

Calgary:

- Dr. Pierre Crouse
 - Intramed Medical Centre
 - www.intramed.ca
 - 403-255-6196
- Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein
 - Circle Medical @ Copperfield
 - www.circlemedical.ca/circumcision-calgary.html
 - 403-726-0524
- Dr. Eric Babins
 - Southland Sport Medicine Clinic
 - <http://southlandssportmedicine.ca/dr-eric-babins/>
 - 403-251-9535
- Dr. Karen Zwiers
 - Riley Park Maternity Clinic, Sunnyside Clinic
 - www.newborncircumcision.jimdo.com
 - 403-284-3711
- Dr. Ralph Gurevitch
 - Associate Foot Specialists Clinic
 - www.associatefootspecialists.com/newborn-circumcision
 - 403-228-5221

High River:

- Dr. Dulynn Hastings
 - High River Pinnacle Medical Centre
 - 403-908-0357

Okotoks:

- Dr. Doug Anderson
 - Crystal Ridge Professional Centre
 - www.foothillscircumcision.com
 - 403-995-0010