

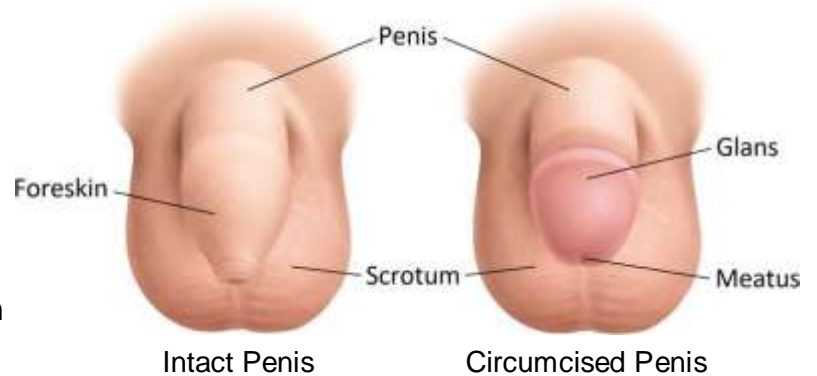
# Deciding about circumcision

## What is a circumcision?

Circumcision is an optional surgery that removes the foreskin from the penis. For some families, circumcision is an important religious practice.

## What is a foreskin?

It is a natural fold of skin that protects the glans (head) of the penis. The foreskin is the most sensitive part of the penis. It also reduces friction during sex by gliding.



## How is a circumcision done?

Circumcision takes about 20 minutes. A provider will tell you how pain is managed during the surgery. You will get care instructions after.

1. Your child will first be placed to keep their body still.
2. The foreskin will be separated from the glans.
3. It will then be removed with a clamp and scalpel.
4. Lastly, the penis will be covered with gauze.

## What if my child does not get circumcised?

Parents can choose to keep their child intact (not circumcised). In America, circumcision is being done less often. About half of children now have an intact penis.

- This allows your child to make their own decision when older.
- The intact penis needs no special care. Good hygiene is easy whether intact or circumcised.
- A circumcision is rarely needed for health reasons.

## What are the benefits of circumcision?

- **Urinary Tract Infection (UTI):** UTIs are not common in males and usually easy to treat. Circumcision lowers the chance of getting a UTI by 1 out of a 100. Staying hydrated and good hygiene prevents most UTIs.
- **Phimosis:** Rarely, the foreskin can get too tight. Skin creams often fix this, but sometimes a circumcision is needed. Phimosis is avoided by not forcibly pulling on a child's foreskin.
- **Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD):** Circumcision is not recommended to reduce STDs in developed countries. Safe sex practices, like using condoms and getting vaccinated, are the best ways to stop STDs.

## What are the risks of circumcision?

- **Pain:** Pain medicine is given during the surgery. Moderate pain can still happen.
- **Bleeding and Infection:** There will be slight bleeding that is usually well controlled. Sometimes there is too much bleeding. In rare cases, your child may get an infection that needs to be treated.
- **Meatal Stenosis:** Irritation from diapers can cause the meatus (pee opening) to get too small. About 15 out of 100 circumcised children are affected. This can make it hard to pee. Surgery may be needed to fix it.
- **Function:** Removing the foreskin changes penis sensitivity. It also causes more friction during sex.
- **Appearance:** Sometimes too much or an uneven amount of foreskin is removed. This can cause tight erections. Children may have a repeat circumcision to remove more skin. The healing skin can also attach to the glans.

## What do healthcare professionals say about circumcision?

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend the routine circumcision of newborns but believes that families should have access to it. Health organizations agree that there are no clear medical reasons to circumcise healthy children.

Parents should weigh these views along with the risks and benefits of circumcision. Talk with your health care provider to help you decide what is best for your child.

## Other helpful teaching sheets:

- [#1312 Intact penis care](#)

## Visit this resource for more health & wellness information:

- <https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents>

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**