

Circumcision of Your Newborn Son

By Dr. March

CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision is the removal of part of the foreskin of the penis, or that part of the outer skin of the penis that covers the glans, or head, of the penis. It has been performed in the past mainly for religious and traditional reasons.

There is evidence that circumcision decreases the risk of urinary tract infections among male children, though these are very rare to begin with. Care and cleaning of the newborn penis is a bit more involved without circumcision.

Just like the benefits of circumcision, risks are also minimal or infrequent, though they do exist. Infection, bleeding, the need to stop bleeding with a touch of chemical cautery or a small stitch, and damage to the penis are among the risks.

Anesthesia is available, in a form acceptable and approved at the hospital at which we practice. For anesthesia, we provide a dilute solution of xylocaine (local numbing medicine) which we inject around the base of the penis to numb the penis during the procedure. This carries a small risk of hematoma formation (a bruise filled with blood), and even damage to the nerves of the penis. You may decline anesthesia for your baby if you prefer. Your son will also be given acetaminophen (Tylenol) and a few drops of sugar solution by mouth, which has been shown in some studies to calm newborns during circumcision.

Because the risks of circumcision are minimal, and the benefits are also minimal, you may decide on whatever basis you choose to either have us circumcise or not circumcise your newborn son. This is normally done on the first day after birth, but first depends on the pediatrician performing a complete history and physical at some point in time prior, giving us medical clearance to proceed.

The nursing staff at the hospital will help you with care of your son's circumcised penis, and teach you tips on care that you should continue after your discharge from the hospital.