

# **Circumcision: What You Need to Know**

## **Narrator**

Whether or not to circumcise your baby boy is an important and individual decision.

Surgically removing the foreskin of a boy's penis – called circumcision – is usually done before a baby leaves the hospital, although some religious rituals perform the procedure when a baby is 8 days old.

Parents should weigh the pros and cons, consider cultural and religious beliefs, and talk with their doctor before deciding if circumcision is right for their child.

While the procedure is not medically necessary, the American Academy of Pediatrics says there are benefits to circumcision, such as less risk of urinary infections in babies, and later in life a lower risk of penile cancer and some sexually transmitted diseases.

While circumcision is a fairly simple procedure, complications such as excessive bleeding, infection and problems with anesthesia, can occur – as with any surgery.

There are a few techniques used in newborn circumcision. The most common type involves an incision, or surgical cut of the foreskin. Most doctors use local pain relief for the baby, but if you're considering circumcision, that's something you'll want to verify with your doctor. Your baby's doctor should also explain what circumcision technique he will use, and how to care for your baby afterwards.

Whichever decision you make about circumcision, keeping your baby's penis clean is a necessary part of healthy hygiene.

The circumcised penis may look red for the first few days and a gauze with petroleum jelly might be applied after the procedure.

Again, follow the doctor's specific instructions for care, which may include replacing the dressing on the wound for a few days.

Washing the penis with warm water is fine. Using petroleum jelly on the area for several days will help the diaper not stick to the wound.

A scab may appear, but don't worry, it should go away on its own in about a week.

Call your baby's doctor if you see any signs of infection, including: significant redness or bleeding, swelling or a yellow discharge that doesn't go away.

If you decide not to circumcise your son, there is no special care needed for newborns with an uncircumcised penis. General washing with soap and water should be all you need to keep it clean. Just remember to be gentle with the foreskin and do not try to pull it back.

The decision whether or not to have your baby boy circumcised is a personal one. Doctors say the best time to make this decision is before the baby is born, since circumcision is safest if done as a newborn.

Educating yourself on circumcision and considering all the factors will help you make the best decision for your little boy.