



## Children's Health

# Circumcision

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

### WHAT IS CIRCUMCISION?

Every male is born with a covering over the sensitive end of the penis. This covering is called the foreskin. Circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin from the head of the penis. This leaves the end of the penis exposed.

### WHY IS CIRCUMCISION DONE?

Circumcision, which is only a widely accepted procedure in a few places in the world, is practiced by some cultures for religious and social reasons. This procedure began as a way to help prevent disease by making the penis easier to clean. Today, in the United States, it's mainly done as a societal practice.

During recent years, the popularity of circumcision has been falling steadily due to better hygiene practices and concern over the pain the infant experiences during the procedure.

### FACTS ABOUT CIRCUMCISION

- Newborns should be at least 1 day old before a circumcision is performed.
- Although slight, there are risks involved with circumcision. Infections and bleeding can occur.
- Local anesthesia can be used during circumcision, but it's most often done without it.

### CARE AFTER CIRCUMCISION

To prevent the scab on the penis from sticking to the diaper, apply petroleum jelly liberally to the head of the penis. Wash the penis with warm water. Avoid using alcohol or baby wipes. Pat dry with a soft towel.

### CARE OF AN UNCIRCUMCISED PENIS

If you choose not to have your baby circumcised, it's important to keep the penis clean and free from bacteria. Clean the exposed foreskin gently during the first four years. The foreskin may not fully retract until puberty. Never try to force the foreskin back.

