

# CIRCUMCISION.

KNOW THE FACTS.

## Should we have our son circumcised?

At birth, boys have skin that covers the end of the penis, called the foreskin. Circumcision surgically removes the foreskin, exposing the tip of the penis. Circumcision is usually performed by a doctor in the first few days of life. An infant must be stable and healthy to safely be circumcised.

Scientific studies show some medical benefits of circumcision. However, these benefits are not sufficient for the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to recommend that all infant boys be circumcised.

Because circumcision is not essential to a child's health, parents should choose what is best for their child by looking at the benefits and risks. Circumcision may be more risky if done later in life, so parents should decide before or soon after their son is born if they want it done.

## Reasons parents may choose circumcision

- **Medical benefits**, including
  - A slightly lower risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs). A circumcised infant boy has about a 1 in 1,000 chance of developing a UTI in the first year of life; an uncircumcised infant boy has about a 1 in 100 chance of developing a UTI in the first year of life.
  - A lower risk of getting cancer of the penis. However, this type of cancer is very rare in all males.
  - A slightly lower risk of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
  - Prevention of foreskin infections.
  - Prevention of phimosis, a condition in uncircumcised males that makes foreskin retraction impossible.
  - Easier genital hygiene.
- **Social reasons.** Many parents choose to have it done because "all the other men in the family" had it done or because they do not want their sons to feel "different."
- **Religious or cultural reasons.** Some groups such as followers of the Jewish and Islamic faiths choose circumcision for religious and cultural reasons.

**For more information about our Obstetrics Services, please call Northwest Medical Center – Bentonville at 479-553-1000 or Willow Creek Women's Hospital at 479-684-3000.**

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The following are reasons parents may choose NOT to have their son circumcised:

- Fear of the risks. Complications are rare and usually minor but may include bleeding, infection, cutting the foreskin too short or too long and improper healing.
- Belief that the foreskin is needed. Some people feel the foreskin is needed to protect the tip of the penis. Without it, the tip of the penis may become irritated and cause the opening of the penis to become too small. This can cause urination problems that may need to be surgically corrected.
- Belief that it can affect sex. Some feel that circumcision makes the tip of the penis less sensitive, causing a decrease in sexual pleasure later in life.
- Belief that proper hygiene can lower health risks. Boys can be taught proper hygiene that can lower their chances of getting infections, cancer of the penis and STIs.



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