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Patient Education:

Circumcision

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This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject.

Keyword(s): andcircumcision

description **Deciding whether to have your newborn son circumcised may be difficult. Learn about the procedure, its benefits and risks, and how to care for your son after the procedure.**

What is circumcision?

During a circumcision, the foreskin (skin that covers the tip of the penis) is removed. The procedure takes only about 5 to 10 minutes. Use of a local anesthetic (medicine that numbs only a small, specific part of the body) is recommended to make the procedure less painful. The anesthetic may be given as an injection or applied as a cream. Circumcision is done in the hospital by a doctor, or at home by an experienced professional as part of a religious or cultural ceremony.

Circumcision is usually done during the first 10 days after birth if the baby is stable and healthy. Often, it is done the first or second day after birth. Circumcision is riskier and more complicated in infants older than 2 months of age, and in older boys and men.

How do I decide whether to have my son circumcised?

Deciding whether to have your newborn son circumcised may be difficult. You will need to consider the benefits and the risks of circumcision. Factors such as your culture, religion, and

personal preferences may also affect your decision. It is a good idea to decide before your son is born whether you want him to be circumcised.

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recommends that parents talk to their family doctor about the potential benefits and risks of circumcision when making their decision.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says the health benefits of circumcision outweigh the risks. However, the AAP does not think the benefits are great enough to recommend that all male newborns should be circumcised.

What are the health benefits of circumcision?

Studies have shown some limited health benefits of circumcision. It offers some limited benefit in preventing urinary tract infections (UTIs) in infants. Overall, UTIs are not common in circumcised or uncircumcised males. Newborn circumcision also offers some benefit in preventing cancer of the penis in adulthood. However, this cancer is rare in all men, whether or not they have been circumcised. Circumcision may reduce the risk of certain sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but preventing STIs has more to do with a man's sexual practices (for example, using condoms, limiting the number of sex partners) than with whether or not he is circumcised.

What are the risks of circumcision?

Like any surgical procedure, circumcision does have some risks. However, the rate of problems after circumcision is quite low. Bleeding and infection in the circumcised area are the most common problems. Both of these can be treated by your doctor.

How do I care for my baby's penis after

circumcision?

It normally takes about 7 to 10 days for the penis to heal after a circumcision. Some swelling of the penis is normal. It is also normal for a yellow discharge or coating to form over the tip of the penis. Don't try to take this off. It will go away on its own. Gently clean the area with water every day, whenever your baby needs a fresh diaper. Use mild soap and water to clean stool off of the penis. This will help prevent infection.

If there is a bandage on the penis after circumcision, the bandage will probably fall off the next time your baby urinates. Ask your doctor whether you should leave the bandage off or if you should put on a new bandage each time you change your son's diaper.

Sometimes, your baby's urine and the pressure from his diaper will irritate the newly exposed skin on the tip of the penis. This can be treated by putting petroleum ointment (such as Vaseline) directly on the area. It will usually get better after a few days.

When to call your doctor

After the circumcision, you may notice a small amount of blood on your baby's diaper. If the bloodstain is larger than the size of a quarter, call your doctor right away. You should also call your doctor if:

- The wound does not stop bleeding
- Your baby does not have a wet diaper within 6 to 8 hours after the circumcision
- Redness and swelling around the tip of the penis does not go away after 3 to 5 days, or it gets worse
- The yellow discharge or coating on the tip of the penis does not go away after 7 days
- A Plastibell device was used and it does not fall off within 10 to 12 days
- Your baby has a temperature of 100.4°F or higher

How do I care for my baby's penis if I choose not to have him circumcised?

Keeping the penis clean with soap and water helps reduce the risk of problems or infections. When your son gets older, his foreskin will separate from the tip of his penis. This is called retraction. It happens at different times for different boys, but most boys can retract their foreskin by the time they are 5 years of age. Don't try to force the foreskin to retract before it is ready. You can damage the penis and cause pain and other problems. Once the foreskin is ready to retract, you can teach your son how to gently pull the foreskin back and clean the skin underneath. He should wash beneath his foreskin every day while bathing or showering.