



Manchester
Urology

Circumcision

An Information Leaflet (*Written May 2008*)



What is a circumcision?

A circumcision is a minor surgical operation to remove your foreskin. The foreskin is gently pulled forward and trimmed away, and the edges are closed using dissolvable stitches and/or special glue. The operation usually takes about thirty minutes and is performed under a general anaesthetic (when you are completely asleep) or under local anaesthetic (numbing injection).

What are the benefits?

The most frequent reasons for circumcision are:

- *Phimosis*. This is when the foreskin is so tight that it cannot be pulled back over the glans (the head) of the penis. This can make washing very difficult and can also cause pain when the penis is erect or during sexual intercourse.
- *Paraphimosis*. This is when the foreskin has been pulled back over the glans but then cannot be replaced to its original position. Painful swelling of the foreskin and glans can then occur. This can sometimes happen suddenly and may require a visit the Accident and Emergency Department for urgent attention.
- *Balanitis*. This is an infection of the foreskin and the skin underneath. It can be treated with antibiotics or steroid creams, but if the condition returns a circumcision may be advised to prevent repeated infection.

The benefits of a circumcision may be that;

- you will no longer have a tight or painful foreskin
- you will not have further infections in this area
- sexual intercourse should be more comfortable
- you will find it much easier to wash and clean this area.

Are there any risks involved?

Anaesthetics

- If you have had a local anaesthetic; you should not drive until you can perform an emergency stop without it hurting. It is advisable to wait at least twenty four to forty eight hours after the operation before attempting to drive.
- If you have had a general anaesthetic; you may feel normal soon after you wake, but you will be drowsy and your reactions sluggish for twenty four to forty eight hours. It is important that in the first day of having had a general anaesthetic you should try to avoid:

- Being left in the house alone, nor look after young children
- Driving (it is advisable to check with your insurance company as to how long your insurance is invalid following a general anaesthetic)
- Operating machinery; this includes cookers and other domestic appliances.
- Making any important decisions or sign any legal documents
- Drinking alcohol

Possible Complications

- *Infection*. As with any surgical procedure there is a small risk of infection. You may have a daily bath or shower and wash gently around the wound. Pat the wound dry thoroughly with a clean towel. If you notice any excessive swelling, redness, pain, oozing from the wound or if you develop a temperature or feel unwell, you should contact your GP as you may require antibiotics.
- *Bleeding*. If the wound starts to bleed, use some cotton gauze and apply pressure to the area. If the bleeding becomes very heavy or will not stop, contact your GP or visit the Accident and Emergency Department of the hospital where you had the operation, if possible.



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- *Delayed wound healing.* This can happen if your stitches tear before your wound has completely healed. This is why it is important to try to avoid sexual activity for four to six weeks or until the wound is completely healed.
 - *Pain.* You will have some discomfort and soreness, which is usually relieved by taking painkillers. If necessary, you may apply a small amount of Vaseline or cotton gauze, to prevent the wound rubbing on your clothing. Wear comfortable, close fitting underpants. Avoid tight jeans or trousers. You may feel a slight pulling around the stitches as the wound heals.
 - *Bruising or swelling.* It is normal to experience some bruising and swelling around the operation site. This will settle.
 - *Altered or reduced sensation of the glans of the penis.*
 - *Altered body image.* You may not be completely satisfied with the appearance of the your penis following the operation.

What are the alternatives?

In some cases there may be alternatives to having the circumcision, which include:

- Creams that claim to help with a tight foreskin. These creams thin and soften the foreskin, to make it easier to pull back, although there is no scientific proof that they work permanently.
- The Urologist may be able to loosen the foreskin by making one or a few small slits in it to stretch it, rather than remove it completely.
- If part of the foreskin stays stuck to the penis, the skin may be separated with a minor operation. This is called division of adhesions.

There have been reported attempts to restore the foreskin but no procedure gives satisfactory results. Surgical procedures are still experimental and the long term results are unknown. If you wish to have your foreskin restored, you should consult your GP, who will direct you to a specialist reconstruction surgeon.

How long will I be in hospital for?

Circumcision is usually performed as a day case, which means that you will be allowed on the same day as your operation. However, the surgeon may feel that it would be more appropriate for you to stay in hospital overnight.

What happens to me when I arrive at the ward?

You will not have had anything to eat or drink for about six hours before your operation. If you would normally take tablets during this time, please ask at the pre-operative assessment clinic which you should continue to take.

You may undergo some routine clinical observations, such as blood pressure, pulse, temperature or blood tests.

An anaesthetist will visit you on the ward, to discuss the anaesthetic and the risks involved.

A pubic shave may be necessary.

Before going to the operating theatre, you will be asked to change into a theatre gown.

Any jewellery (except your wedding ring), dentures and contact lenses must be removed.

What happens after the procedure?

When you return to the ward, you may eat and drink as soon as you feel well.

Your wound will be covered with a dressing, which should be left in place overnight. You may soak the dressing off in a bath or shower the next day and you will notice that you have stitches around the glans of your penis, which is now exposed. The stitches do not need to be removed as they will go soft, come undone and fall out within two or three weeks.

If you have any pain, you may request painkillers from the nursing staff.



Discharge arrangements

You should arrange for a responsible adult to collect you from hospital and transport you home.

Any necessary follow-up outpatient appointments will be arranged with your local urology clinic and sent to you via a letter to your home address.

If there is a problem

Many patients discharged from hospital after a circumcision do not need to be seen again in clinic and are usually advised to contact their GP should they have any problems.

Day to day living

- Children will be able to return to school after seven to ten days and resume sports and swimming, two to three weeks after the operation, so long as there is no discomfort or swelling.
- *Work.* You may return to work after about a week if you have a light job. You may require longer if you have a heavy, manual job and this will depend on how well you feel.
- *Exercise.* This can be resumed when you feel comfortable, gradually increasing the intensity after one to two weeks.
- *Sex.* You should avoid sexual activity, including masturbation, until your stitches have dissolved and your wound is fully healed. This may take up to four to six weeks. You will continue to have erections during sleep, which do not usually cause any problems but can be uncomfortable. On resuming sexual activity, you may notice a slight increase in the sensitivity of the head of the penis during intercourse.
- Circumcision does not affect your sexual desire or performance, although if discomfort does occur during intercourse your erection will fail. In this case, please avoid sexual intercourse for another week.



For further information or to arrange an appointment with a consultant, please call: 0800 656 9616

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