

## CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision has been practiced as a religious rite for thousands of years. In the United States most boys are circumcised, but usually for social rather than religious reasons.

At present, there is controversy over whether or not circumcision is advisable from a medical standpoint. Recent information suggests that there are potential medical benefits to circumcision such as a lower rate of urinary tract infections. Circumcision does, however, pose certain small risks such as infection or bleeding. The decision of whether to circumcise your child (other than for religious reasons) is one that should be made by the parents in consultation with their doctor. We will be glad to discuss with you the benefits and risks of circumcision.

**Care of the Circumcised Penis** – If you choose to have your son circumcised, your obstetrician will normally perform the procedure on the second or third hospital day. Afterward, a light dressing of gauze with petroleum jelly will be placed over the head of the penis. The next time your baby urinates, it will probably come off. The tip of the penis will look quite red for the first few days, and you may notice a yellow secretion. Within a week the redness and secretion should gradually disappear. Until that time, we suggest frequent application (perhaps with diaper changes) of a small amount of petroleum jelly to the head of the penis. The important thing is to keep the area as clean as possible. If particles of stool get on the penis, wipe it gently with soap and water during diaper changes.

Usually, after circumcision has healed, the penis requires no additional care. Occasionally a small piece of the foreskin remains. This should be pulled back gently each time your child is bathed. Examine the groove around the head of the penis and make sure it is clean.

**Care of the Uncircumcised Penis** – In the first few months, your son's penis should be simply cleaned with soap and water, like the rest of the diaper area. Initially, the foreskin is connected to the head of the penis and shouldn't be retracted.

We will let you know when the foreskin has separated and can be retracted safely. This will not be for several months to years. After this separation occurs, you should retract the foreskin occasionally to cleanse the end of the penis underneath.