

The Uncircumcised Male Infant

Information for Parents

Caring for an uncircumcised penis:

1. Wash the penis area at bath time with gentle, nonirritating soap. Do not try to pull back on the foreskin until the baby is at least six months of age.
2. After six months of age, you may start to gently pull back on the foreskin whenever the baby has a bath or you clean the penis. Never force the foreskin back or cause pain, gently pull back only as far as it goes easily.
3. As your child becomes older, he should be taught to gently pull back the foreskin every time he has a bath/wash. He should clean the skin and then return the foreskin to its normal place.

Problems that can occur with an uncircumcised male:

MINOR (usually does not need any treatment)

- white lumps that collect under the foreskin
- swelling at tip of penis during urination that lasts only a short time

SERIOUS (conditions that may need a visit to the doctor and treatment)

- infections of the foreskin
- the foreskin getting stuck so that it cannot return to its normal place

History:

Neonatal circumcision has been one of the most frequent operations performed on males in the United States, at one time close to 97 percent and most recently estimated at around 45 percent. Frequency in Canada has been closer to 50 percent and in recent years has been estimated to continue at around 40 - 45 percent. The procedure is uncommon in Northern European countries, Central and South America and Asia.

Development:

As more males are not routinely circumcised at birth, how to care for the uncircumcised male is a frequent question. In drafting appropriate recommendations, it is helpful to review this aspect of the male development.

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Development Continued:

It is during the third month pregnancy that a fold of skin develops at the base of the glans penis and begins to grow forward (distally) and this skin will become the foreskin (called prepuce). The dorsal (top aspect) grows more rapidly and initially only the top portion (dorsum) is covered. By the fifth month of pregnancy, fusion occurs between the inner lining of the prepuce and the epithelium lining of the glans penis.

As a result the foreskin (prepuce) is completely retractable in only 4 percent (4 of every 100) newborn males, In about 46 percent (46 out of every 100), it cannot even be retracted far enough to see the end of the glans penis and the urethral opening.

By six months of age the prepuce can be completely retracted in only 29 percent of males and by three years of age, 10 percent of males still have a foreskin that cannot be retracted. However, without any specific treatment, by age of 17 years, the foreskin is completely retractable in 99 percent of males.