

“My own preference, if I had the good fortune to have another son, would be to leave his little penis alone.”

*Dr. Benjamin Spock, Pediatrician*

“Many parents today realize that if they had been given accurate information about circumcision, they would never have let anyone circumcise their baby.”

*Marilyn Milos, R.N.*

“Circumcision is irreversible; I call for parents to be more considerate and responsible in their decisions.”

*Dr. Vigen Zargarian, Pediatrician*

“Routine circumcision is not a medical issue or a social issue. It is a sexual issue and a human rights issue.”

*Frederick Hodges, Medical Historian*

“The best reason to let a baby keep his foreskin intact is that it's almost a certainty that he will be glad you did.”

*John A. Erickson, Intactivist*

“Of all the horrors that have been visited upon Armenians in the last century, I hope circumcision was/is not one of them.”

*Gary Harryman, Intactivist*

“From the perspective of Christian theology, it is essential to acknowledge that there is an inherent fundamental conflict in Christening and, at the same time, circumcising infant boys. Christianity proposes the concept of “circumcision of the heart” and not the ‘flesh’ and one negates the other.”

*Astrik Vardanyan, Anthropologist*

#### **List of other organizations:**

NOCIRC

Attorneys for the Rights of the Child (ARC)

Circumcision 911.

Circumcision Resource Center (CRC)

Doctors Opposing Circumcision (D.O.C.)

Equality Now

National Organization of Restoring Men (NORM)

National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine

Mutilation of Males (NOHARMM)

Nurses for the Rights of the Child (NRC)

Students for Genital Integrity

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# Questions

# And

# Answers

# About

# Infant

# Circumcision

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## **ACWF**

### **Armenian Child Wellness Foundation**

*A Nonprofit Educational Organization*

*Dedicated to the Well-Being of Children*

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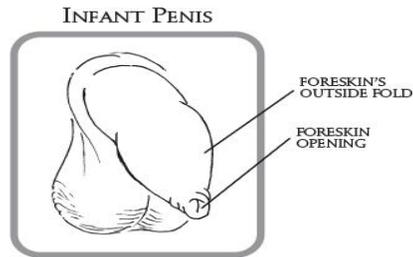
\*Adapted from NOCIRC

**Armenian Child Wellness  
Foundation**

*Educating Parents  
for the Well-Being of Children*

## WHAT IS CIRCUMCISION?

Circumcision is the cutting off of the fold of skin that normally covers and protects the glans (head) of the penis. This double layer of skin, the prepuce, is commonly known as the foreskin.



## WHY IS THE FORESKIN THERE?

The foreskin comprises as much as half, or more, of the penile skin system and has three known functions: protective, sensory, and sexual. During infancy, the foreskin is attached to the glans and protects it from urine, feces, and abrasions from diapers. Throughout life, the foreskin keeps the glans soft and moist and protects it from trauma and injury. Without this protection, the glans becomes dry, calloused, and desensitized from exposure and chafing. Specialized nerve endings in the foreskin enhance sexual pleasure.

**"The foreskin protects the glans throughout life."  
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**

## WHEN AND WHY DID DOCTORS IN THE U.S. START CIRCUMCISING BABIES?

Doctors in the English-speaking countries started circumcising babies in the mid-1800s "to prevent masturbation," which was blamed for causing many diseases, including epilepsy, tuberculosis, and insanity. Other reasons have been given since then, but all of them, including the claim that circumcision prevents cancer of the penis, cancer of the cervix, and venereal diseases, have been

disproven. *We now know that the foreskin is a normal, sensitive, functional part of the body.*

## IS CIRCUMCISION PAINFUL?

Yes. Circumcision is extremely painful - and traumatic - for a baby. Just being strapped down is frightening for a baby. *The often repeated statement that babies can't feel pain is not true.* Babies are as sensitive to pain as anyone else. Most babies scream frantically when their foreskin is cut off. Some defecate. Some lapse into a coma. The reason some babies don't cry when they are circumcised, is that they can't cry because they are in a *state of shock*. Most babies are circumcised without anesthesia. Anesthetics injected into the penis don't always work.

## DOES CIRCUMCISION HAVE RISKS?

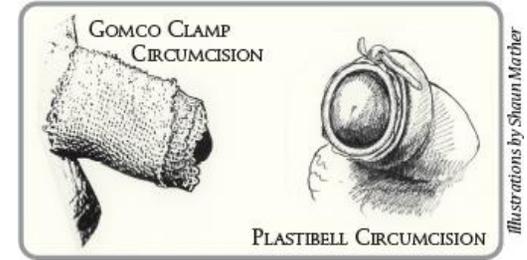
Yes. Like any other surgery, circumcision has risks. They include: excessive bleeding, infection, complications from anesthesia, surgical mistakes, including loss of glans and loss of entire penis, and in rare cases - death.

Many circumcised males suffer from: extensive scarring, skin tags and skin bridges, tearing and bleeding at the scar site, curvature of the penis, tight, painful erections, difficulty ejaculating, impotence, feelings of having been violated, feelings of having been mutilated.

*All* circumcised males lose some or most of the sensitivity in their glans and *all* of the sensitivity in their foreskin.

## IS CIRCUMCISION HARMFUL?

Circumcision amputates approximately 50% of the heavily innervated tissue of the penis that is a specific erogenous zone. Circumcision creates an abnormal physical appearance with disfiguring scar encircling the shaft and the glans penis permanently exposed to drying, abrasion, and mechanical injury.



## PARENTS HAVE NEW CONCERNS

More and more parents - including Jewish & Muslim parents - are questioning the wisdom of subjecting their baby to the pain and risks of circumcision and its life-long consequences. Today parents are wondering if they have the right to consent to the irreversible amputation of a *healthy, normal, sensitive, functional* part of their baby's penis - an amputation that experts regard not just as unnecessary, but as contraindicated. More and more parents are becoming truly informed and, as a result, more and more parents are deciding against circumcision and are keeping their baby boys intact.

## HOW DO I CARE FOR MY YOUNG SON'S INTACT PENIS?

*"Care of the uncircumcised boy is quite easy 'leave it alone' is good advice" (AAP).* External washing and rinsing with warm water is all that is required. Minor irritations may occur due to highly chlorinated water (swimming pools, hot tubs), too many bubble baths, harsh soaps and detergents, antibiotics, and concentrated urine from dehydration. Drinking water, soaking in soap-free warm baths, and running around with bare bottoms help healing. *"Do not retract the foreskin in an infant, as it is almost always attached to the glans. Forcing the foreskin back may harm the penis, causing pain, bleeding, and possibly adhesions. The natural separation of the foreskin from the glans may take many years" (AAP).* The first person to retract a child's foreskin should be the child himself.