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Circumcision

Description

Circumcision is the surgical removal of the **foreskin** (the tube or sac of skin covering the tip of the penis).

Adult circumcision is most often performed as treatment for the following:

- **Phimosis.** Difficulty retracting the foreskin during erection or cleaning.
- **Paraphimosis.** Difficulty placing the foreskin back over the head of the penis after it has been pulled back or retracted. This can be painful, causing swelling of the tip of the penis.
- **Balanoposthitis.** An inflammation of the head of the penis and the surrounding foreskin.
- **Genital warts.** A sexually transmitted disease that develops in the foreskin of the penis.
- **Cancer of the penis.**

Some men choose to have this surgery to change the appearance of the penis.

Preparation

Before you have surgery:

- Tell your doctor about any medications, vitamins, or supplements you are taking.
- Take your usual medications as prescribed unless your doctor tells you to stop.
- Do not take Aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) for seven days prior to surgery.
- Tell your doctor if you have any medical conditions that require antibiotics before dental work or surgery (such as heart murmurs, heart defects, or artificial joints).
- Tell your doctor about any bleeding problems you may have.

On the day of surgery:

- Clean your genitals and the surrounding area very well; your doctor will tell you if you need to trim or shave your pubic hair.
- Wear loose-fitting underwear.
- Bring someone with you or make arrangements for someone to drive you home after surgery.

What to Expect During the Procedure

Adult circumcision is often performed under **general anesthesia** (unconsciousness caused by drugs). It can also be performed while you are conscious, but using medication to block feeling in the penis. A cream may be applied to the base of the penis to numb the skin. Once this area is numb, your doctor may inject medication into the area around the base of your penis using very thin needles. This medication blocks the nerves so that you have no sensation in your penis.

During surgery, your doctor will cut away the foreskin at the head of your penis. Any bleeding is stopped by using a tool called an **electrocauter** which uses heat and energy to seal areas that are bleeding. The incision is closed using a very small needle and **sutures** or stitches that are absorbed by your body. Surgical wound tape may also be used to help hold the stitches in place and prevent pulling of the stitches as you heal. This tape may also help shape the tip of the penis as it heals.

A bandage is placed tightly around the area to keep it clean and to reduce swelling. Your doctor will tell you how long to leave this bandage in place.

Following surgery, your penis may be swollen and may be bruised for one to two weeks. Many people find that over-the-counter pain relievers such as Tylenol are sufficient to control discomfort following surgery. Avoid Aspirin and ibuprofen products, such as Advil and Motrin, because they may cause bleeding. Your doctor may prescribe stronger pain relievers as well.

Possible Risks

Risks of circumcision include:

- Bleeding.
- Blood clots.
- Infection.
- Reduced sensation during intercourse.
- Change in the appearance of the penis.
- Removal of too much or too little foreskin.
- Additional surgery.

To reduce the risks and promote healing you will need to:

- Avoid sexual activity including masturbation and erections for four to six weeks following surgery.
- Wear loose-fitting underwear.
- Follow your doctor's instructions for caring for your wound.