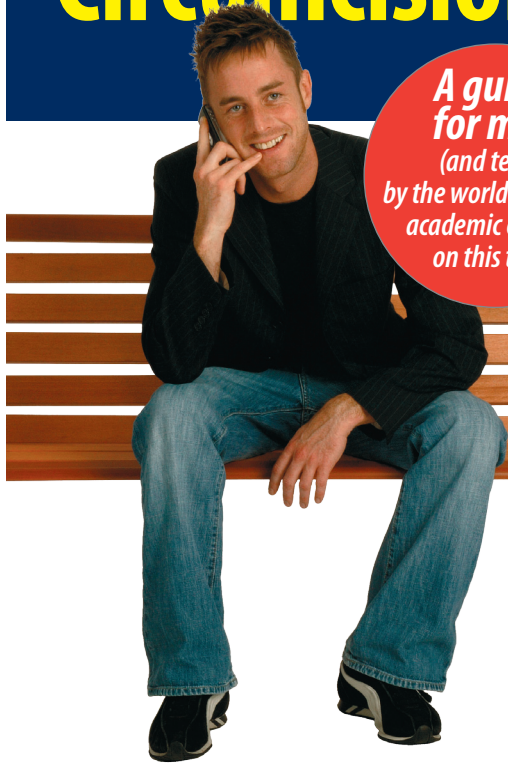


# Have you heard about the benefits of Circumcision

A guide for men (and teens) by the world's leading academic experts on this topic



Circumcision is a simple surgical procedure that removes the foreskin – a sleeve of skin covering the tip of the penis. Although infancy is the ideal time for a circumcision, many adult men and teens seek circumcision for medical, health, sexual, cultural, religious or cosmetic reasons. A man does not need a medical reason to have a circumcision. Personal preference or social reasons are perfectly valid. In order to make an informed decision, he must carefully consider the benefits and risks.

Since the foreskin traps bacteria and other infectious agents, as well as accumulating malodorous smegma, its removal improves *genital hygiene* and reduces risk of diseases and other conditions over the lifetime of the man and his sexual partners.

## History

Circumcision has been performed for thousands of years as part of the culture of indigenous people who live in hot environments such as in Australia, the Pacific Islands, equatorial countries, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. Worldwide, approx 38% of males are circumcised, with large variations between countries and ethnic groups. Higher socio-economic-educational ranking is associated with higher rates of circumcision. In two western countries where circumcision is common, rates today for men are 91% (US-born whites) and 66% (Australian-born). For newborns, rates there decreased in the 1970s-80s, then rose again in line with medical research findings that attested to the benefits.

## Benefits of circumcision

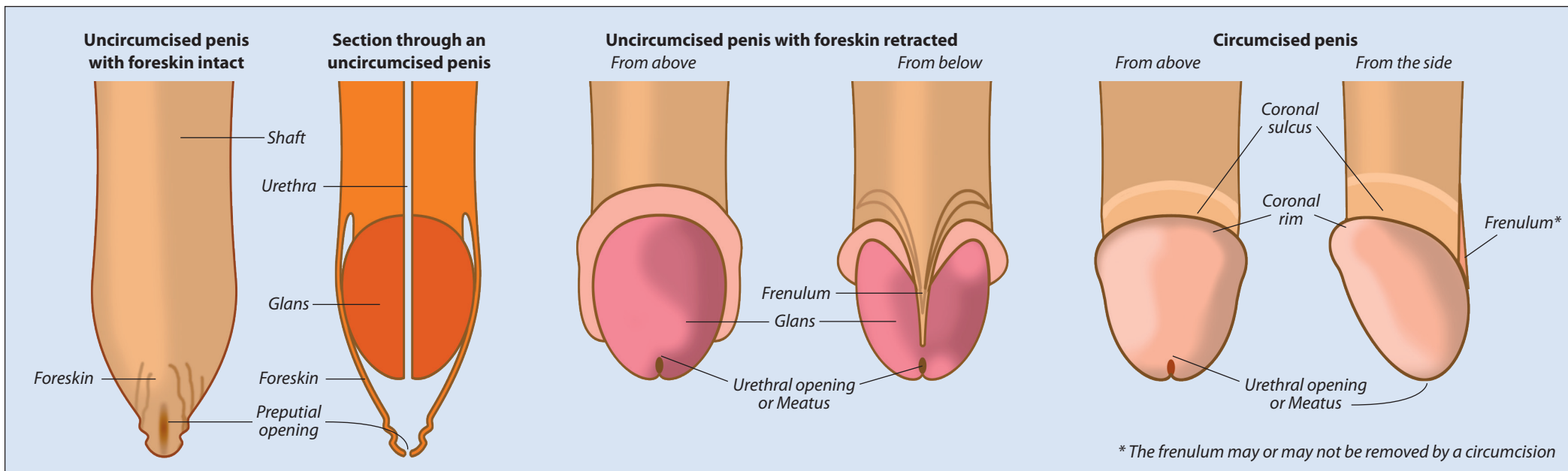
- Eliminates the risk of *phimosis*, which affects 1 in 10 teenage boys and men. This condition refers to a tight foreskin that cannot be pulled back fully, so making cleaning under it, and passing urine, difficult and painful. Phimosis also greatly increases the risk of penile cancer and is a cause of foreskin and catheter problems in nursing homes.
- Reduces by 3-fold the risk of *inflammation* and *infection* of the skin of the penis. One in 10 uncircumcised men suffer from inflammation of the head of the penis and foreskin at some time in their lives. This rises to 1 in 3 if the uncircumcised man is diabetic. (Diabetic men also have other severe problems when uncircumcised.) In contrast less than 2% of circumcised men experience such inflammation.
- Substantially reduces the risk of urinary tract infections in men and risk of renal complications.
- Over 20-fold decrease in risk of invasive *penile cancer*, which has a high fatality rate. One in 1,000 uncircumcised men get penile cancer, which often requires penile amputation or disfiguring surgery leading to impaired penile function.
- Significant studies suggest that uncircumcised men have a 15-50% increase in risk of *prostate cancer*, which affects 1 in 6 men.
- Reduces by approximately 3-fold the risk of acquiring *HIV (AIDS)* during sex with an infected woman. HIV enters via the vulnerable inner lining of the foreskin of a healthy uncircumcised penis, but can also infect via sores anywhere on the penis (caused for example by

genital herpes, balanitis or inflammation). The man's risk, especially if uncircumcised, will be greater if he engages in unsafe sex with individuals at high risk for HIV infection. Condoms should always be used irrespective of circumcision status.

- Circumcision also affords substantial protection against thrush, as well as sexually transmitted infections such as *papilloma (wart) virus*, *genital herpes*, *syphilis*, *chancroid*, *trichomonas* and *mycoplasma*.
- Circumcision reduces by up to 5 times the risk of the man's female partner getting *cervical cancer* (which is caused by human papillomavirus) and *chlamydia* (which can cause *infertility* in both sexes, *pelvic inflammatory disease* and *ectopic pregnancy*). It also reduces the risk of her getting genital herpes, bacterial vaginosis, HIV and other STIs since the load of infectious bacteria and viruses that accumulate under the foreskin is delivered into the female genital tract during sex.
- Up to 10% of males reaching adulthood uncircumcised will later require circumcision for medical reasons. Many are reluctant to go ahead with this or are incorrectly advised to 'put up' with the problem rather than have a circumcision. Early elective circumcision means penile problems are less likely to arise, and thus consequent issues are avoided.
- Credible research shows that most women prefer the circumcised penis for appearance, hygiene and sexual activity. One reason being the increased contact of the penis with the vagina and thus greater stimulation.
- In general, sexual function and sensation is the same or better in circumcised men. The problem of overly tender sensitivity of the head of the penis experienced by many uncircumcised men is virtually eliminated.

## Risks and recovery after circumcision

- All surgery involves some risk, but in western countries risks from medical circumcision in men and teens are low, and are lower still for infant circumcisions. Around 2-3% of men circumcised by experienced practitioners will have a minor complication such as bleeding or infection. Each is easily treated. Often what some report as local infection is actually part of the normal healing process. The risk of serious injury is extremely rare.
- Circumcision is not advised for men with a bleeding disorder such as *haemophilia*. If it is medically necessary, it will require a specialized team of physicians.



- A local *anaesthetic* (plus a mild sedative) is usually preferable for a circumcision, but some surgeons will insist on a general, depending in part on the circumcision technique they use. An oral analgesic medication is often prescribed for pain relief after the anaesthetic wears off, but many men find it unnecessary. Often there is very little post-operative discomfort and normal activities can be resumed after 24 hours.
- After surgery there is some swelling, which will resolve within a few weeks. Healing is not complete until the sutures dissolve. This usually occurs within four weeks, after which sexual activity may be resumed. Final cosmetic appearance takes longer.

### Further information

may be obtained from the following web sites:  
<http://www.circinfo.net> (Brian Morris DSc PhD)  
<http://www.circumcisionamerica.org>  
 (Circumcision Academy of America)  
<http://www.circumcisionaustralia.org>  
 (Circumcision Academy of Australia)  
<http://www.circlist.com>  
<http://www.circumcision.net.au> (Terry Russell OAM MB BS)  
<http://www.circumcisionhelpdesk.org> (The Circumcision Helpdesk)

### Authors

The text of this brochure has received consensus support from the following circumcision experts (listed alphabetically), who contributed to its formulation:

- Bertran Auvert, MD PhD (France)
- Robert Bailey, PhD (University of Illinois)
- Stefan Bailis, PsyD LP (Minnesota, USA)
- Xavier Castellsague, MD MPH PhD (Barcelona, Spain)
- Mike Cormier (New Brunswick, Canada)
- Guy Cox, DPhil (University of Sydney, Australia)
- Daniel Halperin, PhD (University of North Carolina, USA)
- Sam Kunin, MD (Los Angeles, USA)
- Howard Stang, MD (Minnesota, USA)
- Jake Waskett (Manchester, UK)
- Robin Willcourt, MD (Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Australia)
- Tom Wiswell, MD (Orlando, Florida, USA)
- Edgar Schoen, MD (Oakland, USA), former Chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Circumcision, kindly served as a consultant.
- Lead author: Brian Morris, DSc PhD FAHA  
 Professor Emeritus, School of Medical Sciences, University of Sydney, Australia

### In conclusion

*Circumcision confers a lifetime of medical benefits. 1 in 2 uncircumcised males will develop a medical condition caused by their foreskin, leading to suffering and, in some cases, death. In contrast, circumcision can prevent most of these. The surgical risk from medical circumcision in a modern setting is extremely low, while the long-term functional and cosmetic outcomes are generally excellent.*

***Benefits exceed minor risks by over a hundred to one!***

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