
■ **NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN** ■

INFORMANT

PREVENTING INFANT CIRCUMCISION — FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

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Preventing Infant Circumcision — For the Well-Being of All

Babies, Mothers, Fathers, Lovers.

Circumcision harms them all. Here's why:

Babies . . . This procedure is the only surgery performed on children without a diagnosis. It is an American cultural tradition that is sold to uninformed parents as a health benefit while actually performed by doctors to perpetuate a social custom.

For years, many pediatricians told parents that their babies didn't feel pain. Even today, doctors fail to administer anesthesia in 75% of the circumcisions performed in the United States. The resulting pain is excruciating. It alters the sleep and eating habits of babies for days afterwards. Even anesthesia does not completely eliminate the surgical and post-operative pain.

In the year 2000, Michigan doctors will amputate normal, healthy and functioning tissue from 56,000 baby boys without their consent at a cost of \$14 million dollars.

This surgery will permanently alter the appearance and function of their penises, but there has never been any direct scientific evidence that it will prevent disease.

Mothers . . . Many mothers struggle against their natural instincts to protect their child when they sign consent forms to circumcise. Often, they are pressured by their husbands and their relatives into making a choice that they live to regret. They feel traumatized after they find out what happened to their child.

Fathers . . . Many fathers are too afraid to consider harm to their penis and thus deny they suffered any loss from circumcision. A father often strangely insists that his son "look like" him, while secretly fearing that something might be wrong with his own penis because it doesn't look like the one his son was naturally born with.

Lovers . . . Circumcision removes a normal, functioning part of the penis. It strips away and amputates specialized skin and mucous membrane that, in the adult male, would have been a sleeve of flesh over 3 inches long and 1-1/2 inches in diameter.

All the sexual sensitivity provided by nerve endings in the foreskin is lost to circumcision. During intercourse, the foreskin would have glided back and forth over the end of the penis. This gliding motion inside the vagina of a woman would have provided smoother, less abrasive, and more delightful sexual stimulation for both partners.

NOCIRC leads the civilized world in promoting the human rights of children to the lifelong benefits of intact genitals. **NOCIRC** is busy educating a new generation in the 21st century to prevent infant circumcision for the well-being of all.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

People like to hear what they like to hear. As a result, they have been misled by a long history of false medical claims about circumcision. These claims are rooted in the prejudice of medical researchers who have already been circumcised. All of their studies are poorly designed, lack direct cause-and-effect evidence, make misleading claims, and offer no cost-benefit analysis. However, they offer the results that people who favor circumcision want to hear and they are widely reported by the media. Later studies that disprove the original claims are often never published in the mainstream.

NOCIRC works hard to prevent circumcision fraud and deception by informing consumers of medical bias, conflicts of interest, hidden agendas, and pseudoscience.

On behalf of all the children, thanks! *Norm Cohen, Director*

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A Jewish Mother's Awakening

by *Anonymous*

I am Jewish and the mother of a girl and a boy. I have to admit I never gave the issue of circumcision much thought. Our street is filled with non-Jews who circumcised their children. Most books on anatomy feature the circumcised penis. According to them, not only was the foreskin a useless flap of skin, but it wasn't even worth depicting. In fact, it was worse than useless—it was a breeding ground for infection. So in my mind circumcision was not only mandatory for the Jewish covenant, but it was actually preferable. "It is great to be circumcised," I thought. "The foreskin is just awful. Who would ever want to keep it? It has no value."

The only uncircumcised penises I ever saw were in some ancient issue of *Playgirl* which had a feature on the men of Europe. "Weird looking penises," I thought. Where's the *glans* (head of the penis)? They always showed them flaccid, so I had not one clue that the foreskin actually retracts! I thought, "Those poor sods, they can't even enjoy sex with that raincoat covering their whole organ." I felt sorry for them. I had no clue that the foreskin was continuous with the shaft skin. I thought the amount removed was fixed like an exact science. Of course, I didn't know that in a baby the foreskin is fused to the head of the penis.

I had heard some anti-circumcision rumblings. If I ever encountered a holier-than-thou, smug creep calling me a child abuser and lecturing me on what Judaism should and should not be, you can be damned sure I would never have listened to a word they said.

Yes, I had been to a *bris* (Jewish circumcision), but I never stared at the penis before or after. I couldn't figure out what was happening with those wacky clamps flying everywhere. Sure, the baby did cry, but babies are always screaming. I believed the lie that it doesn't hurt, or at least that it doesn't hurt that much, or that they cry because they are being restrained.

Sure, I'd met a couple of non-Jewish mothers who didn't do it. In most cases, the dads were from Europe or Latin America, and I thought, "Poor little idiots, they just think it's more important to look like Dad than take part in the wonderful health benefits that circumcision offers."

Every mother I've ever talked to, especially non-Jews, said it was no big deal. The baby just slept through it. I had a very good relationship with my mother, and she carried out the covenant on my brother who also never had a problem with it. She was a great mom, so tell me how could I ever realize it was not what it seemed to be? How dare anyone call my mother a child abuser! How dare anyone accuse Judaism of being barbaric when in America we've decided circumcision is a great health measure.

So proudly I embarked upon the covenant with my son. My husband, being Israeli, never gave it any pause either. I didn't even run crying out of the room during the procedure. Now why in the world did I all of a sudden wake up to this issue when most people, Jew and non-Jew alike, don't give a moment's pause?

First off, the bris was more than I bargained for. My baby was supposed to stop crying after it was over and sleep it off until morning and be totally fine. That's what all the other moms told me would happen. That's what I expected to happen. Well, that did not happen. My child continued to cry and awakened every hour until I couldn't stand it.

Exasperated, I called the *mohel* (Jewish circumciser). The mohel I chose was highly recommended, and he came from five generations of mohelim. I had put some effort into choosing him. I told him my son would not stop crying. He told me to take off the dressing, and that will make him feel better. I had to remove it myself, and it seemed so tight. My baby was very relieved when it was off.

I called the mohel back to rant about this, and he said, "He is urinating, right?" I said

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MISSION STATEMENT

NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN

NOCIRC of Michigan is a non-profit, consumer rights advocacy group helping parents understand that circumcision is harmful to their children.

We educate parents and health care providers in Michigan about the harm of circumcision and about the proper care of intact genitals. We protect consumers from fraudulent medical claims. We actively promote the benefits of normal genitalia and foreskin restoration.

We know the removal of normal, healthy tissue from a child's genitals—in the name of medicine, religion or social custom—results in a loss of sexual function and is a violation of human rights.

We are a group of dedicated consumer activists and health care professionals. We are committed to effective education, advocacy and activism on behalf of children to protect them from harm. We are part of a worldwide movement to end all forms of male and female genital mutilation.

The Informant (ISSN 1092-020X) is published three times a year by **NOCIRC of Michigan**. It represents our commitment to provide educational information in this state and to activists everywhere. Articles, comments, and questions are welcome.

NOCIRC of Michigan

Educating a New Generation

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yes. "It wasn't tight," he said. "Some babies are just more fussy," and blah, blah, blah. Then I hated the mohel, and I could have killed him. Maybe I hated the whole idea that my baby had to endure this and so I was taking it out on the mohel. "That incompetent jerk!" I thought. He made my baby suffer!

I read through the description of healing and the follow-up care. I was confused. It said the head of the penis will be red and raw, and often it will turn yellow and crust over with a film during healing, which should resolve in two weeks. I should continue changing the gauze with *Bactricin* at every diaper change until the wound healed. Then I began to question. If the mohel cut off the skin where I saw the circumcision scar then why is the head so irritated? It didn't sit well with me. But I let it pass. Unlike other babies whose penises healed quicker, it took my baby the full two weeks.

At about six months or so, it looked like my baby's penis was disappearing. I took him to the pediatrician, and he said he's got a foreskin adhesion. He applied some pressure to the base of the penis, and the penis popped out. The edge of the glans was now revealed. It was all red and irritated, and there were pockets of white stuff in there.

I thought a circumcised penis was supposed to be low maintenance! I'd been following all the care instructions, and my baby got a bath every night. "How can he have a foreskin adhesion if he doesn't have a foreskin?" I thought. I've since met another mom whose child also had this condition where the foreskin wants to re-attach to the glans, much like a pierced ear would close up without an earring. It's actually a common complication, and my pediatrician didn't make a big deal out of it.

By this point, I was convinced the mohel did something wrong. I did research on circumcision, and I didn't like what I found out about the procedure. I was mortified that I was so ignorant of the mechanics of the foreskin and how it was removed! Now I was discovering the truth. The foreskin isn't useless at all. The issue of sexual sensitivity might be subjective, but it is truly hard to believe that much tissue located in the genital region doesn't offer at least some sexual

sensation. How could I have believed otherwise?

No one ever said that the foreskin itself had any value. I knew the risk that the procedure could be botched but not that the loss of a foreskin was a bad thing. That's what I'd always heard. If cutting off a useless appendage can save you a urinary tract infection, then why not? It was great health insurance, and you'd satisfy the ol' covenant.

I learned that the foreskin is far from useless. A friend of mine whose husband is uncircumcised later said to me, "if you ever saw one in real life it would be completely apparent that it's one of Mother Nature's better inventions." It's like a sheath. It covers the head of the penis and keeps it moist, lubricated and sensitive. The head of the penis is only exposed when a male urinates or during sex. The foreskin includes mucous membranes, and they're analogous to the mucous membranes in the female.

Like the female sex organ, the male is also supposed to have a protective covering and mucosal tissue. After circumcision, the skin cornifies and dries out, making intercourse more abrasive. Mother Nature's penis works better than a man-made one. When the foreskin is removed, it renders the penis less like a sex organ.

I'd always been told that mohelim were so skilled, and it was only doctors who were messing up circumcisions. Jews might be a bit better at performing them, but mohelim

have done plenty of damage too. After my son was about two years old, I was still looking out for problems. "Was it done right?" I'd ask my pediatrician constantly.

The procedure was really more brutal than I ever had anticipated. What of the babies who are truly maimed by circumcision? How would I feel about Judaism if I was one of the unlucky ones that lost my penis due to some stupid, medically unnecessary intervention? That's what turned the corner for me. Even if death and maiming are rare, they are still a price too high to pay for a Jew or non-Jew.

It took close to three years for me to finally see the light on this issue. It's not an easy journey for a parent, especially a Jew, and especially when your husband and your father don't think it's worth talking about.

I do feel very overwhelmed. I am consumed with guilt and horror that I carried out this ritual cutting on my son out of complete and total ignorance. I'm not trying to let myself off the hook easy, but I too feel violated by it. I feel I have been betrayed by being lulled into a false sense of complacency from the tacit approval of routine infant circumcision in the medical community, the media, American culture, and of course, Judaism. We are influenced by our culture and our doctors are still considered demi-gods.

I have come full circle. I'm still angry and upset. Of course, it's not my penis, but he is my son, and I feel rage too. I'm not plan-

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This new billboard outside a convenience store on a major street south of Akron, Ohio advertises the NOCIRC web site and is now the talk of the neighborhood!

ning any more children, but if an accident should happen, how could I ever do another bris? I couldn't. Then my two sons will be different. If I had a second son, he would be the only one in the Jewish preschool bathroom with a foreskin.

There are still lots of questions. Should I bury the issue? Do I really want my son to feel bad about this when most men don't give it much thought? Ignorance is bliss. I was ignorant. Should I keep him in the dark? Or should I tell both my kids that I hate circumcision, and that I felt violated, and that I hope they won't pass on this archaic tradition?

CALENDAR

Exhibit Dates

Volunteers are needed to help staff the **NOCIRC** information booths at the exhibitions listed below. Please call (248) 642-5703 to volunteer.

◆ **Ann Arbor Art Fair**

July 19th - 21st, 10:00 am - 9:00 pm
July 22nd, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Liberty Street
Ann Arbor, MI

◆ **Neonatology 2000:**

Opening the Millennium
November 9th - 10th, 2000
8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Department of Pediatrics
University of Michigan Medical School
Ann Arbor, MI

LOCAL NEWS

Waste and Abuse in MI Medicaid

Why is Michigan's Medicaid program spending \$400,000 per year paying for routine infant circumcisions? This elective surgery is the only surgery performed on children without a diagnosis of disease. The American Academy of Pediatrics declined to recommend routine infant circumcision in its latest policy statement on the subject.

Write Robert M. Smedes, Deputy Director for Medical Services Administration, Dept. of Community Health (smedes@state.mi.us, PO Box 30479, Lansing, MI 48909) and ask him why Michigan is still wasting money on this unnecessary coverage that could be spent providing Michigan's children with worthy medical care. Medicaid programs in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, North Dakota, and Mississippi have already dropped coverage for this abusive surgery.

Restore Yourself!
A HANDY KIT FOR
CIRCUMCISED MEN

The Restore Yourself! kit is a safe and painless way for a circumcised man to enjoy the benefits of having a foreskin.

Foreskin restoration gives a man new skin to cover the *glans* of his penis and provides the gliding motion found in a natural penis. It will compensate for some—but not all—of the damage caused by circumcision. Men who begin the foreskin restoration process report increased sexual sensitivity within 30 days.

The **Restore Yourself!** kit is available for purchase on-line, confidentially and securely, using your credit card.

Skin grows in response to the application of continuous tension. Using the kit is simple and takes only a few minutes a day. It may take three months to see new skin and an optimal restoration might take three to four years.

The **Restore Yourself!** foreskin restoration process uses the popular "T-Tape Technique" and comes complete with all of the materials needed to start restoring today, including an excellent, illustrated instruction guide.

If you or the one you love miss the natural functions of a foreskin, then the **Restore Yourself!** kit will help.

Order on-line today at our secure web site, **www.RestoreYourself.com** or call (248) 642-5703 or send a check or money order for **\$27.95**, payable to: **NOCIRC of Michigan**, PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012.

30-Day Money-Back Guarantee!

As our valued customer, your privacy is always absolutely assured.

If you have any medical condition, symptom or dysfunction affecting or related to your genitals, or if you have any health questions or concerns, first consult a competent and caring doctor.

Profits from the sale of this kit are spent entirely on advertising and promoting foreskin restoration.

BAD IDEAS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Real Quotes from Real Doctors

"The foreskin is an important factor in the production of tuberculosis. This can be proven by the immunity of the Jewish race from tubercular infections."

Dr. S. G. A. Brown, M.D.
"A Plea for Circumcision"
Medical World
1897; 15:124-125

TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT CIRCUMCISION

Become An Informant

A tax-deductible membership fee of \$25 or more makes you a **NOCIRC of Michigan Informant**. Help us to educate parents!

PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012

NAME:

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