
■ **NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN** ■

INFORMANT

PREVENTING INFANT CIRCUMCISION — FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

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What Every Mother Must Know About: **CIRCUMCISION**

by Nancy Mulnix, RN, MA

He is barely dry from the womb when the nurse comes to take him away. Away from your warm arms and soft breasts, away from your eyes and your ears. She carries him down the hall and into a treatment room. She closes the door, and it begins.

Your newborn son is going to be circumcised. His diaper is removed and he is strapped to a cold, hard plastic board with velcro bands which hold down his arms, straighten his legs and spread them apart. He is covered with a cloth which has a hole in the center. The tray of instruments, hemostats, scissors, crushing clamp, and scalpel, is unwrapped.

The doctor begins. He pinches your son's foreskin first with a single clamp and then another and rotates them to rip away the foreskin from the tender glans at the end of his penis. This takes some time. He then

sews two sutures through the end of the foreskin leaving enough thread so that he can use it to pull the foreskin out over the glans. He pulls it tight, stretching your baby's fragile skin as far as it will go. The doctor then cuts his foreskin up the middle with scissors. He takes a steel device shaped like a bell with a handle and forces it under the cut foreskin and over the glans. He fits the bell into a steel plate, ties the suture up over the handle, pulling the skin tightly, and screws down a nut to anchor the bell to the steel plate, crushing his foreskin. Then he slices off your son's foreskin with the scalpel.

The pain your son feels initially is so excruciating that he screams blood-curdling screams. His eyes swell shut, his mouth freezes open in agony, his face turns purple, he is covered with sweat, his fragile newborn heart races, his oxygen level drops, and his stress hormones rise. Eventually,

the pain becomes so intense that his cries have no sound. And because his tiny arms and legs are strapped to a plastic board, he is totally powerless to escape the pain of this procedure. It can last up to a half-hour.

During his circumcision, your baby can choke and stop breathing. He risks blood loss, infection, adverse anesthesia reactions, scarring, and amputation. Afterwards, he will be exhausted, fussy and hard to calm. He may not nurse well for a day or more. Every system in his body has been traumatized. The excruciating pain has changed him permanently. Research has shown that the pain has altered his neuro-pathways. He will react more intensely to pain in the future.

Circumcision is the most frequently performed surgery in the United States, but the rate is falling. Currently, about 60% of

continued on page 2 ⇒

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Few boys today that escape the circumciser's knife will know that it was the persistent efforts of **NOCIRC** and other organizations that helped them keep their genitals intact. It is not likely they will call us to thank us personally for our work. We are not doing this work in order to be thanked. We are doing it because it is right. We are doing it because civilization rests on what others have done in the past. We inherit both what is good and what is bad. Our work is a chance for us to pass on something good.

When the fundamental right of children to intact genitals has long been accepted, we will have long been forgotten. However, in doing this work for civilization, we know that the highest form of charity is helping anonymously.

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

CONTENTS

What Every Mother Must Know	1
Director's Message	1
Mission Statement	2
Resisting Pressure to Circumcise	3
National News	4
The Restore Yourself! Kit	4
Bad Ideas from History	4
Become An Informant!	4

Every Mother, continued from page 1

newborn boys are circumcised in the US. The rate worldwide is less than 20%. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association both have declined to recommend routine circumcision. The British Medical Association, the Canadian Paediatric Society, the Australian College of Paediatrics, and the Australasian Association of Paediatric Surgeons have all stated that there are no medical reasons for routine circumcision. The British and Canadian health systems do not pay for routine circumcision because they consider the surgery to be elective and not medically justified.

Some parents still believe the myths that circumcision protects against urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases, and penile cancer. They imagine that their son might be upset or confused if his dad is circumcised and he is not. Some women, who have never seen a normal penis, think a circumcised penis is the way a man ought to look. To them, a normal penis doesn't look right. Some parents worry about how to keep it clean.

The claim that circumcision prevents urinary tract infections (UTIs) in baby boys has never been scientifically proven. Boys very rarely get UTIs and their overall incidence is only 1%. Research reported in the *Israeli Journal of Medical Sciences* in 1996 concluded that circumcision itself may actually *cause* urinary tract infections because of the high incidence of babies that developed UTIs after their circumcisions. The UTIs may be caused by bacteria introduced during the circumcision itself.

The United States, which has the highest percentage of circumcised men in the industrial world, also has the highest rate of sexually transmitted diseases in any developed nation. It is common knowledge that practicing safe sex, using good hygiene, and limiting the number of sexual partners are the only effective ways to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

The American Cancer Society has said that the current consensus of most experts is that circumcision should not be recommended to prevent penile cancer.

What if dad or brothers or friends have been circumcised and your son isn't? How

can you explain the difference? A child can understand a simple, honest explanation such as, "When your father and brothers were born, we were told that removing their foreskins was important for their health. Now we know better."

What about hygiene? A normal penis with its foreskin requires no special care other than external washing. It is never necessary for a caregiver to retract the foreskin. The foreskin will retract by itself in its own good time as a boy grows up. This may take until after puberty. In the meantime, it serves as protection for the delicate glans and should be left alone.

An animal lab isn't allowed to do a procedure like circumcision without anesthesia, yet some of our hospitals still do. Parents are finding the need to demand pain relief when surgical procedures are done on their newborns. However, none of the pain relief available today for circumcisions is 100% effective.

Human rights experts and medical ethicists are questioning the legal and moral right of a physician to amputate a healthy, normal body part without the consent of its owner. Circumcising little girls has been condemned by the World Health Organization, outlawed in the United States, and banned in some of the African countries where it originated. This country has offered asylum to women and girls fleeing genital mutilation in their home countries. One wonders why we protect girls from any genital amputations and still allow them to happen to our baby boys.

There are no scientifically proven benefits to circumcision, yet serious risks have been documented. It is clear that circumcision, with or without pain relief, causes harm to newborns.

Why, then, would you want your son's foreskin cut off? Do we have the right to submit our sons to the amputation of a normal, healthy body part? Is it our duty to act out of custom? Or is it our duty to protect and defend our children from harm? It is time to end the pain, the screams, and the harm. It is time to cherish and love our sons and to say no to circumcision.

So, when that nurse appears in your doorway, send her away.

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.

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NOCIRC of Michigan

Educating a New Generation

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Resisting the Pressure to Circumcise

by Lori Hanna

I feel very fortunate that nine years ago, as I was expecting my first child, my OB/Gyn informed me there was no medical reason for circumcising my soon-to-be-born male child. I remember being very puzzled and asking the doctor, “Then why is it done?” I don’t recall what his response was, but I decided to start asking more questions.

I asked his father, who had been circumcised at birth, and he said he would support my decision to have our son remain intact. Did he realize what he had been missing in being circumcised? I asked my own father, who still remains adamant that my son will regret not being circumcised, because he remembers the pain and agony of a guy he was in the army with that “had to be” circumcised. I even asked my priest, who said it was not required in our faith. Although circumcision is discussed in the Bible, there is no reason for Catholics to have it done.

Well, I was always the rebel of the family and decided once again to go against the grain. I checked in to the hospital at 2:20 pm Sunday, June 14th, 1992. They did the usual hospital stuff—hooked me up to an IV, had me lie down on the bed, took blood pressures, and monitored the baby. Keith arrived at 4:40 pm, a healthy 7 lbs, 9 ozs. They laid him on my stomach immediately, where I was finally able to touch my first born. I remember kissing him on his head and thinking how wonderful and a true miracle this child was, with ten tiny fingers, ten tiny toes, big round eyes, a button nose, and beautiful and perfect as only mother nature could dream.

I heard all the stories about how much harder bathing him would be, about infections, diseases, and about the teasing from other boys about being “different.” But I couldn’t see inflicting any unnecessary pain or altering his body. After all, I believed then and now, that God doesn’t make mistakes, and so I left Keith with his foreskin intact. Should he choose to be circumcised later in life, it will be at his will, not mine.

We were released from the hospital 48 hours later, only to have Keith re-admitted a day

Kevin and Keith

later. He was hot and lethargic, possibly with meningitis. For the next four days, he saw numerous nurses and doctors. They all tried to get me to consent to a circumcision before he left the hospital again! Only God knows if it was a new mother’s instinct to protect her baby from harm that gave me the strength to endure the pressure to give in to circumcision.

I discovered after having another son last year, born 11 weeks premature, that circumcision myths still exist. My instinct now is even stronger to protect—and now not only my own sons, but also other children—from this unnecessary and painful surgery.

Kevin was due December 7th, 1999 but instead arrived abruptly less than two hours after getting to the hospital on September 20th, weighing a mere 3 lbs, 6.5 ozs. They whisked him away immediately to be ventilated, checked, tested, monitored and to begin our roller coaster ride of having a premie. Through it all, Kevin fought with every heartbeat and breath, and took it all in stride.

Within a few weeks, Kevin responded to Keith. Every time Keith told Kevin to smile, he did! It’s amazing to realize how much even the tiniest of creatures can respond.

Kevin stayed in neonatal intensive-care a total of 48 days. His weight went down to 2 lbs, 11 ozs, due to the treatment for his high blood pressure. We also found out the upper chamber of his heart was wide open. It required no corrective surgery, only moni-

toring throughout his life. He also had hemorrhaging in both lobes of his brain.

Nevertheless, I was approached fifteen times throughout his hospitalization about getting him circumcised! I had declared within hours of his birth that I wanted him to remain intact and to be given only breast milk. The nurse wrote this down in his chart. However, I was still told of the “benefits” of circumcision and the “risks” involved in leaving his foreskin intact. The nurses told me how I shouldn’t worry and that they’d have it done tomorrow. Very few of the intensive-care nurses were supportive of my decision.

I can’t imagine what damage or strain a circumcision could have done to his little body! He could literally fit in one hand. His little legs were no bigger around than my own thumb.

After many weeks had gone by, a nurse told me they’d have him circumcised before discharge, just sign the consent form, which basically said nothing about complications or what to expect. I responded that I would get very upset and make a big scene if anyone tried to remove his foreskin. That is when the nurses finally left me alone about getting it done.

I witnessed one baby, and heard many others, being circumcised during our seven-week stay and I can testify that they do feel it! Their cries alone confirmed the torment they must endure during the “simple procedure.” They are exhausted afterwards and many refused to eat. They need time to recover, just as anyone going through surgery needs time. The difference here is that other procedures have benefits.

It was obvious to me that the medical resident I witnessed performing a circumcision had never done one in his life. The other residents had to explain it to him. He was very nervous. The senior resident had to “fix it up” afterwards.

After learning so much from **NOCIRC**, I now ask parents, “Do you know who performed your son’s circumcision? How

continued on page 4 ⇒

Resisting Circumcision, cont. from page 3
much experience did that person have? Was someone being trained for the surgery using your baby? Was anything given for pain before, during, and after the surgery?"

Because mothers and fathers don't witness their son being circumcised, they feel it's no big deal, and claim their son is "fine" a few days later. Do they notice how red and sore the newly exposed glans is and do they imagine the pain associated with that exposure? Do they observe their baby's breathing, eating and sleeping patterns over the next week and his disposition after the surgery?

NATIONAL NEWS

Genital Integrity Awareness Week

The nationwide *Genital Integrity Awareness Week* has been set for April 1st - 8th, 2001. Several special events in Washington D.C. are being sponsored by a coalition of individuals and organizations committed to raising public awareness about the rights of all human beings to intact genitals.

Activists from all over the country will attend a **NOCIRC** conference March 31st and April 1st to provide advice and experience about preventing infant circumcision through education, advocacy, and activism. Following the conference, there will be marches to the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court, public information tables, and lobbying of Congress. All child advocates from Michigan are welcome.

I can honestly say, that in the nine years that it's been since my first decision to allow my sons to remain intact, they have never had any infection of their penis. I find it much harder to keep their nose, ears, teeth, and fingernails clean than it is to clean their intact penis.

Keith has noticed that he looks different than some other boys, and last year he asked me why. I just explained to him that he was left the way he was born, while some other boys' parents chose to have their son's foreskin surgically removed. Keith walked away from me obviously proud, which also made me proud of my choice—no matter what!

It's been well worth the pressure and ridicule from a few people to see the pride in my

son. I love them both whole, as nature intended, and feel very blessed in not only having them in my life, but also finding **NOCIRC** in those early years when support for my decision was so rare.

Thank you, Marilyn Milos, founder of **NOCIRC**, for speaking out so many years ago, and Norm Cohen, for being nearby, informative, and supportive to me personally and to my sons.

*Lori Hanna is the Education Coordinator for **NOCIRC of Michigan** and resides in Auburn Hills with her two sons. You may contact her at kklh@juno.com or call (248) 853-6720.*

Restore Yourself!

A HANDY KIT FOR CIRCUMCISED MEN

The *Restore Yourself!* kit is a safe and painless way for a circumcised man to enjoy some of 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. If you or the one you love miss the natural functions of a foreskin, then the *Restore Yourself!* kit will help.

Skin grows naturally 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 3 to 4 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.

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! And, 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, first consult a competent and caring doctor.

BAD IDEAS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Real Quotes from Real Doctors

"I consider myself some authority, inasmuch as I have never yet failed to relieve convulsions in small boys by circumcising them, although I have had cases where they had as many as thirty fits a day."

Dr. E.W. Feige, M.D.
"Circumcision as a Remedial Measure"
Medical World, vol. 33, no. 9, Sept., 1915 pp. 351-352

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!

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