

I'M NOT MISSING ANYTHING BY BEING CIRCUMCISED, WHY SHOULD I RESTORE?

With no accurate means of comparison, the typical circumcised man does not know what he is missing. A man, colorblind from birth and thinking his sight is normal, might also never question his condition. However, as a circumcised man ages, he loses sensitivity of the penis. Many have difficulty achieving sufficient stimulation to reach orgasm. The foreskin is a definite asset in maintaining this sensitivity.

Foreskin restoration is a process of returning the penis to as close to its original condition as possible. However, it can be frustrating, time-consuming and care must be taken not to use undue force.

While the majority of circumcised men are unconscious of, or deny any negative feelings about circumcision, a significant number are aware of their feeling of loss, resentment and betrayal by parents and anger over this violation of their bodies. When one understands the anatomy of a normal penis, the structure and function of the foreskin, the historical and cultural context of circumcision and the truth behind the myths, one can better understand men's feelings and motivations for restoration. Our message to men is that it is acceptable to care for our bodies in this way.

THE FORESKIN IS A NORMAL, HEALTHY AND BENEFICIAL PART OF THE MALE PENIS

The foreskin consists of at least three structures: an outer foreskin, inner foreskin and the frenulum. It begins as far back as the shaft midpoint, covers the glans (head of the penis), and can extend beyond the glans. The frenulum (similar to that which is under the tongue) connects the foreskin to the underside of the penis. The foreskin and glans are joined by a common membrane at birth and separate gradually over many years. For some, the separation is not complete until puberty.

PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF THE FORESKIN

Protection. The foreskin protects the sensitive glans throughout life from adverse conditions, such as the abrasiveness of clothing. Without the foreskin, the glans becomes dry and calloused and desensitized.

Pleasure. The foreskin is a unique structure filled with delicate nerves and a rich blood supply. The foreskin enhances sexual pleasure, especially as it glides over the corona (ridge of the glans) during sexual activity.

Sensitivity. The foreskin is a highly nerve-laden structure, containing approximately 10,000 nerve endings. It is this structure that gives the man his most pleasurable sensations. It also helps to retain glans sensitivity. Circumcision removes this structure and, over time sensitivity decreases, making it more difficult to achieve satisfactory stimulation.

Lubrication. Much as the way your eyelid 'lubricates' and protects your eye, the foreskin keeps the glans moist and sensitive. This effect is helpful during sexual penetration as the penile shaft glides within its own skin sheath rather than directly, chafing one's partner. Without the foreskin, many couples need additional lubricants.

Privacy. Like the female clitoris, the glans is designed to be a protected internal organ, exposed only when aroused.

WHY MEN RESTORE THEIR FORESKINS

Pleasure. The new foreskin adds pleasure to the penis during sexual activity. For most men seeking restoration, this alone, is reason enough to restore.

Protection. The foreskin protects the glans from the abrasiveness of clothing. When protected, the glans will regain much of its original sensitivity.

Privacy. Like the female clitoris, the glans penis is intended to be an internal organ, visible only when aroused.

Aesthetics. 85% of the world's men feel an intact penis is normal, natural and attractive.

Wholeness. When seeing their circumcision scar, many men sense that part of their body is missing, which is very similar to women who have had a breast removed. Seeking physical and emotional wholeness is quite natural.

Emotional pain. When feeling hopeless over their unchosen circumcised state, men can be helped to manage anger by doing something about a condition which they had always believed was irreversible.

Resentment. A 1991 survey of 301 males seeking restoration information showed that almost 70% of those circumcised as infants or children resent their parents for their circumcision. Regaining power over their bodies reduces resentment.

Empowerment. Victims of rape, crime and child or spousal abuse typically report a deep sense of helplessness and vulnerability. Who is more helpless and vulnerable than a restrained newborn having part of his penis amputated? Men restore to take back control of their bodies from the damage done by parents, their physicians and our culture.

Restoration isn't sought only by those circumcised at birth. Some children are unwillingly circumcised. Others are pressured "for their own good" by friends, sex partners, or the military. Some immigrants circumcise themselves or their sons "to be American." Afterwards, most males note a marked decrease of sensitivity, which leads some to restore.

HOW IS RESTORATION DONE?

Once circumcised, one can only approximate the look and feel of an original foreskin through restoration. For most men, however, this approximation is preferable to their circumcised state. Non-surgical stretching of the shaft skin is the most commonly used method. Many have achieved marked results, with total glans coverage. Skin and its underlying structure has an amazing ability to stretch and grow if gentle tension is maintained over time.

For specific details of these methods, we recommend Jim Bigelow's book, *The Joy of Uncircumcising!* (See "further Reading"), or contact your nearest support group through NORM.

Taping. Using whichever type of first aid tape that works best on your skin, you pull whatever shaft skin you have over the glans and tape it closed. Gentle pressure from the glans will start stretching the skin.

Manually. Other men use their hands for gentle manual stretching of the shaft skin on a daily basis.

Extension Devices. When sufficient skin length has been obtained, various extension devices (weights, elastic straps, cones, etc.) can be used to augment the stretching.

Surgery. Surgical reconstruction is not recommended. Surgery may seem to be faster, but it is riskier, with results that are usually less than satisfactory. It is costly and has not led to good results in most cases. No safe effective surgeries have been developed.

Many men achieve the desired amount of foreskin through manual and taping methods, then seek minor 'touch-up' surgery to contour the tip of the foreskin for a more natural 'snug' fit and/or to reconstruct the frenulum. NORM maintains a list of medical referrals for those who wish to have contouring surgery after the stretching process has been completed.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

The time it takes to recover the glans varies. The factors that influence the nonsurgical stretching methods include: how much shaft skin remains after circumcision, how diligent and persistent one is with stretching, and the amount of foreskin coverage desired. For these reasons, some men achieve 'restoration' after months, while for others, it can take several years. Since the process of restoration can be lengthy and involved, many men find it helpful to join a support group, for the technical and moral support offered by such a group.

WHAT IS CIRCUMCISION?

Amputation of a newborn's healthy foreskin is the only elective surgery for which the patient does not consent. It is not medically indicated. It is an unethical practice. Parents often consent with incomplete knowledge of anatomy or surgical consequences. Tragically, infants (who we know feel pain acutely) often receive no anesthesia.

The baby's arms and legs are restrained. A probe is inserted between the glans and the foreskin and the two structures are torn apart. The foreskin is crushed and a cut is made in it. It is then pulled forward and amputated. The raw glans is then totally exposed, which, along with the remaining inner foreskin, eventually becomes dried membrane and leaves the shaft skin taut and immobile.

This "little snip" removes from 50 to 80% of the sheath's structure. A permanent, visible scar remains. This violation of body and human rights robs the male of his birthright: an intact, fully functional penis.

THE HISTORY OF CIRCUMCISION IN AMERICA

Routine circumcision in the U.S. was not widely practiced until the late 1800's, introduced from England to 'cure' masturbation (then thought to cause insanity and other medical/psychological ills). England rejected routine circumcision in 1949. When the masturbation theory was disproved, the medical profession used hygiene, cancer, infection and now AIDS, to justify the procedure. There is, in fact, no valid medical evidence to justify routine infant circumcision. Medical professionals are slow to abolish a surgery producing millions of dollars annually. Men's Voices show that the medical community violates its prime dictum, "Do No Harm."

MEN'S VOICES

"I'll always be my parents' son, but my body belongs to me and no one else. No one had my permission to circumcise me. Since there was absolutely no medical threat from my foreskin, it is a clear violation of my basic human rights. Could some doctors be giving wrong advice on infant circumcision because it is a big business in the U.S.?" G.D. Arizona

"When we men discuss our feeling about circumcision, no one listens, not even doctors. I'm one of the millions of men who doesn't like being circumcised. I wish I had been able to scream at the doctors, 'Hands off, its mine!'" S.B., Atlanta, GA

"I've been restoring for almost two months and it's hard to believe, sex with my wife is getting better. I actually have more feeling. It's great." 35 yr old man. CA.

"I was cut at the age of 11. As the years have passed, I find that stimulation is difficult to achieve. It seems as though an excess of manipulation, almost to the point of pain, is necessary to achieve satisfaction." V.T., NJ.

"After thirty years in the natural state, I allowed myself to be circumcised because, in my physician's view, there might be problems in the future. For me, the sensitivity in the glans has been reduced at least 50%." T.B.

"I'm a 17-year-old male who is circumcised. I got to thinking, what am I missing? It makes me sad because I'm not whole as I was intended to be. Circumcision has deprived me of the most sensual receptor on my sexual organ." B.J., OR.

FURTHER READING AND AUDIO VISUALS

The Joy of Uncircumcising! Exploring Circumcision: History, Myths, Psychology, Restoration, Sexual Pleasure and Human Rights, 2nd ed., Jim Bigelow, PhD. Available from NORM at www.norm.org The definitive reference on foreskin restoration and the history of circumcision.

Doctors Re-examine Circumcision. By Thomas J. Ritter, M.D. & George C. Denniston. Excellent book on the issue.

Whose Body, Whose Rights? The most profound documentary on Human Rights! Everyone should see it. Go to www.circumcisionvideos.com or contact NOHARMM (info below).

OTHER RESOURCES

NOHARMM (National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males) www.noharrrm.org, P.O. Box 460795, San Francisco, CA 94146. 415.826.9351 voice. 415.642.3700 fax. A national network of men organized against infant circumcision through consciousness-raising, empowerment and nonviolent direct action.

NOCIRC (National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers) www.nocirc.org, P.O. Box 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512. 415.488.9883 voice. 415.488.9660 fax. National and international chapters. Several brochures and an online database are available including: *Answers to Your Questions about Infant Circumcision* and *Answers to Your Questions about Your Young Son's Intact Penis*. Send an SASE to receive an information packet by mail.

CIRP (Circumcision Information Resource Pages) www.cirp.org

ABOUT NORM AND ITS SERVICES

NORM provides moral and technical support for men seeking foreskin restoration. It is open to all men regardless of age, race, religion, sexual orientation or circumcision status. Many groups sponsor monthly support meetings and offer a speakers bureau. There are groups all over the world and more are forming.

The national office supports chapters-in-formation, and provides referrals and resources. Visit our web site at www.norm.org or contact R. Wayne Griffiths at the office in Concord, CA for an up-to-date listing of the NORM services in your area.

National Organization of Restoring Men

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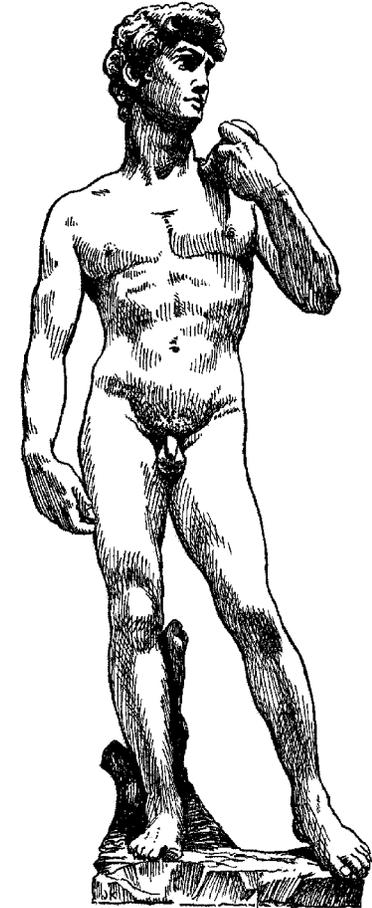
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RECLAIMING OUR BODIES

THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ADVANTAGES OF MALE FORESKIN RESTORATION



The *forced amputation* of a healthy part of an infant's or child's genitals in the name of medicine, religion, or social custom *violates his human rights*.

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