

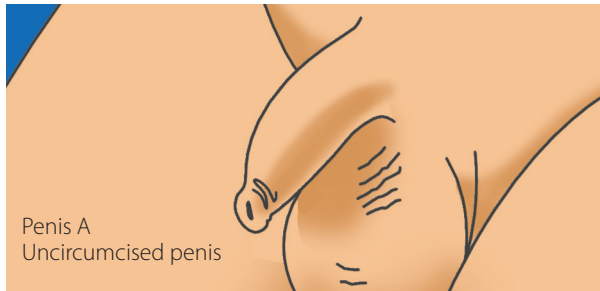
# All about being circumcised

A leaflet for 7 to 10 year old boys

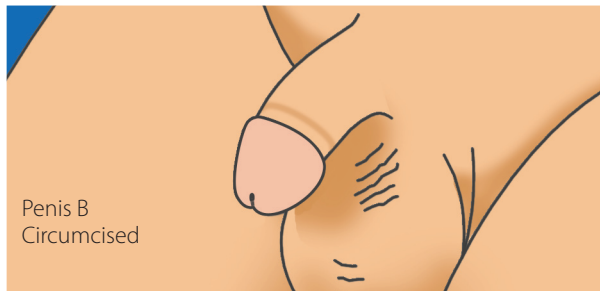
You may call your special 'boy' part a 'willy' or a 'dick' but the real name for it is **penis**.

Penises come in all shapes and sizes but often they are made to look different by

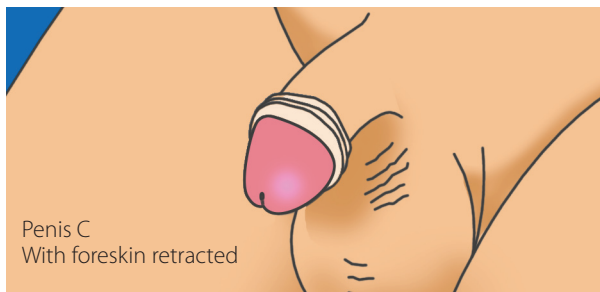
a little operation called **circumcision**. This word has two parts; **circum** which means **around** and **cision** which is short for **incision**, meaning **to cut**. Penis 'A' is how you are born, penis 'B' has been circumcised. All boys are born with a sleeve of skin called the **foreskin** covering



Penis A  
Uncircumcised penis



Penis B  
Circumcised



Penis C  
With foreskin retracted

the head of their penis which is an acorn shaped part named the **glans**. The foreskin hides the glans for most of the time so it can't be seen. When a penis is circumcised, the foreskin is removed, so the glans is always seen. Normally the foreskin of any boy over 8 (and most over 5) years old can be pulled back for a few moments for washing and **urination** – that is having a pee. Penis 'C' on page 1 shows the foreskin pulled back or **retracted**.

Your parents may have given you this leaflet to read and explain everything if...

- Your penis was circumcised when you were a baby or
- You are about to have your penis circumcised or
- You have just had your penis circumcised or
- You have seen a boy whose penis is different from yours

...and you want to know why.

## Where and why is it done?

Worldwide, and throughout history, people have circumcised their boys and young men to show they belong to a particular religion, race or tribe. Modern countries like the United States, circumcise most boys because it's cleaner and prevents or cures several health problems. A lot of people think it looks better too.

Like the appendix and the tonsils, the foreskin is a part of the body we don't really need and it can cause painful problems. So, no foreskin, no problem. It is easy to remove, and most often done when boys are babies, so they don't remember it. What you never had you never miss.

If you weren't circumcised as a baby you may now be about to have it done, or have just had it done. This could be because you had, or have, a problem which the doctor said it will put right.

There are other reasons to circumcise boys as well. It's neat and tidy without loose skin over the end and it helps you to pee better. If you can't (or don't) pull it back your foreskin gets in the way and causes spray – so you may miss the toilet. Mums often ask for their baby boys to be circumcised to prevent this and the mess caused.

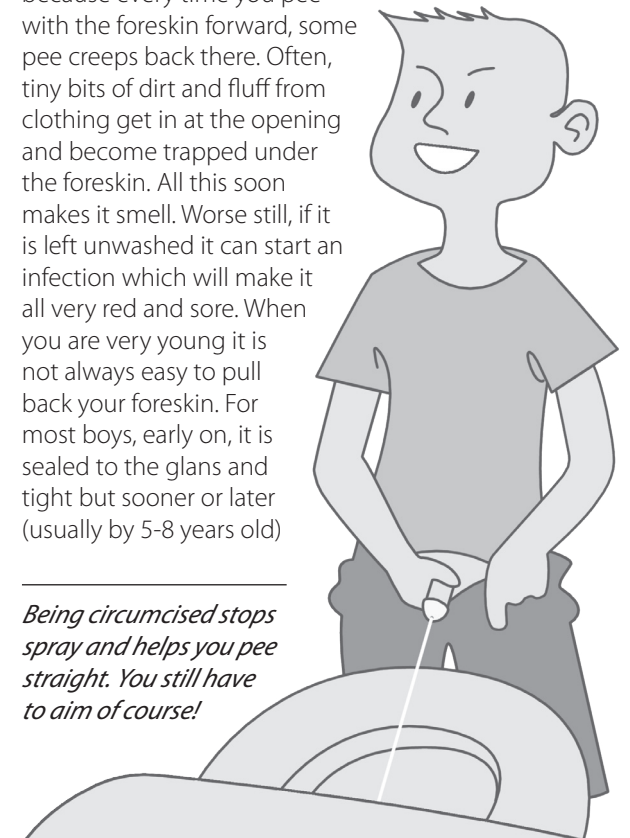
You need to pull back your foreskin to wash under it every day. Lots of boys forget to do it, or they can't do this because it is too tight. Then it can cause painful problems. Parents get fed up with checking and asking if you've done this. Sometimes boys can be a bit sneaky and say they have when they haven't, especially if it hurts them. If you are circumcised you don't need to think about it because your penis gets fully washed every time you have a shower or bath.

Another reason you might have been circumcised is because your dad had it done. Usually parents like all men and boys in their family to have penises which look the same. Often, when one boy needs to be circumcised, his brothers are circumcised as well.

## Why foreskins can be a problem

The space under the foreskin around the glans is naturally a bit wet. This is because it sweats and also because every time you pee with the foreskin forward, some pee creeps back there. Often, tiny bits of dirt and fluff from clothing get in at the opening and become trapped under the foreskin. All this soon makes it smell. Worse still, if it is left unwashed it can start an infection which will make it all very red and sore. When you are very young it is not always easy to pull back your foreskin. For most boys, early on, it is sealed to the glans and tight but sooner or later (usually by 5-8 years old)

*Being circumcised stops spray and helps you pee straight. You still have to aim of course!*



this seal breaks apart and you have to start to take care of it in two ways:

- You need to pull back the foreskin every time you have a pee and make sure you shake or dab the final drops of pee off before pulling your skin forward again.
- At least once, every day, you need to pull the foreskin right back as far as it will go and gently wash around the glans with soap and water. Take care, this part and the inside of the foreskin is very sensitive. Soaps, gels or shampoos can make it sore if left there, so must be washed off well afterwards.

If your penis gets infected because of dirt or urine under the foreskin, you need to see the doctor about it as soon as possible. Don't be worried or shy, doctors see this sort of thing all the time. He or she may give you some creams or tablets which might clear it up. Often, when it happens again, the doctor may say it will be better for you to be circumcised.

The opening in the end of your foreskin has to stretch a lot before it is big enough to pass over your glans. You may find it is too tight and painful to pull back. When you are trying to do this it can split and bleed. The medical name for a foreskin that is too tight is **phimosis**. Sometimes the foreskin may pull back just over the glans and then become trapped in the groove behind the rim. If this happens and you find it won't go forward again, your penis will swell up and really hurt. You need to be taken quickly to the hospital emergency department. Doctors call this **para-phimosis**. Usually the doctor there will circumcise you to stop this painful problem ever happening to you again.

### If you are about to be circumcised...

Try not to worry. It only takes a short while to circumcise your penis and it can be done at the doctor's office or surgery or as an outpatient at a hospital. You will be given an injection around your penis so it will go numb. Or, you can be given something which makes you fall asleep for the short time whilst the doctor circumcises you. Either way you won't feel or see anything.

When the circumcision is finished, your penis might start to feel sore and may burn a bit. It will usually have a small bandage wrapped around the wound. The nurse

will check to make sure you can pee ok and there may be a bit of blood when you do. You need to stay just long enough to be sure all bleeding has stopped and the doctor will deal with it if it hasn't. This is very rare and nothing to worry about. It's important to take care of your new circumcision for the first few days. It will probably mean being off school and no sport or rough games with your friends. Just rest up, so your penis doesn't get knocked. Mum can pad your underpants to keep it comfortable. It's best to just read or watch tv, do jigsaws or play video games for these few days.

Your parents will be given instructions on how to care for your new circumcision. They can get extra helpful information from the medically approved booklet at [http://www.circinfo.com/post-op\\_care/care.php](http://www.circinfo.com/post-op_care/care.php)

At first your penis will swell up and look bruised. This soon goes away and it will heal up very quickly. The bandages are best soaked off gently in a warm bath and the wound left to dry. You can sit around somewhere out of sight, without your underpants, for about half an hour until it does. Probably you will see the small stitches that are used to hold the edges together. Sometimes these melt away on their own, but you may have to go back two weeks later and the nurse will take them out. This only takes a few minutes and doesn't really hurt.

Some doctors use a 'thingy' called a **Plastibell** to circumcise young boys. This fits over the glans whilst the foreskin is pulled up on the outside. A piece of thread is tied around the foreskin, drawing it tightly into a groove and cutting off the blood supply to it. Most of this is trimmed off and the rest just shrivels up and comes away with the ring in about a week. The bell has a handle,



for use while fitting it, which is snapped off to leave the end open so you can pee.

Now come the changes. Your penis will feel very strange at first. Circumcision turns what was an inside part into an outside part of your body. What was moist is now dry. Your glans is quite 'touchy' and different because it had been covered by the foreskin which shielded

it. Now your glans can rub against your underwear all the time as you walk or run. It doesn't hurt, it just sort of tickles. It takes quite a while to get used to this, but in the end you will forget about it. You may also notice your glans feels the heat and cold more when you take a hot bath or go out in a cold wind. The bright colour of your glans when first exposed will also fade. It will all go pale, and so will the circumcision line.

Before you were circumcised you may have seen a small band of skin in the groove under your glans; this is called the **frenulum**. It joins your foreskin to the tip of the glans. In an uncircumcised penis it is like a little strip of elastic which helps keep the foreskin forward and also stops it being pulled back too far. Often this frenulum is tight and causes pain when boys pull back their foreskin. If this is so, the doctor will probably remove it during the circumcision. Some doctors do leave it in place if it has stretched. Removing the frenulum is another good way of making sure any left over circumcised foreskin stays behind the rim of your glans.

It's important to understand that, once you have been circumcised, your foreskin cannot grow again. You will soon get used to the difference and be happy without it. It is more comfortable in hot weather when you sweat, which is why desert peoples do it.

You can expect a bit of teasing when your friends first see your 'new' penis. Just smile with their jokes, knowing it is better for you to be circumcised. If they are not circumcised they may sometimes have a problem and wish that they were. If they have been circumcised they will welcome you to 'their club'.

One last point. Circumcision is a long medical word. Most times you will find people who are circumcised just say they have been 'cut'.



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