

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

Nationwide, about 56% of newborn boys are circumcised in hospitals. Among geographic areas in the U.S., the West has the lowest rate of circumcision at 31%. (2005 Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality)

Q. I need to undergo circumcision. Is the surgery covered?

- A.** Check with your insurance provider as they can provide a definitive answer to your question. Typically, if circumcision – the surgical removal of the foreskin which covers the head of the penis – is medically necessary as you imply, then your insurance provider will cover the procedure. These non-elective circumcisions generally result from having a narrow opening that makes the foreskin difficult to retract, which in turn can lead to pain and inflammation.

Even so, it's a good idea to get the green light from your insurance prior to the procedure with evidence of your doctor's recommendation to save time and energy down the road. Insurance plans are much less likely to cover elective circumcisions (i.e. not medically necessary) later in life because these are often based on aesthetics or personal preference.

While the practice of circumcision is at least as ancient as the biblical story of Abraham, who performed the procedure on himself in observation of a religious covenant, scientific rationales for the removal of the foreskin have been contentious. In the Victorian era, routine infant circumcision was lauded as a way to prevent syphilis (the scourge of its day) and masturbation (deemed almost as bad) – both of which were later debunked.

Today, advocates of circumcision cite that it promotes better hygiene, protects against urinary tract infections (UTIs) during infancy and is associated with a lower risk of contracting HIV and the Human Papilloma virus (HPV) later in life – though this in no way is a substitute for practicing safer sex. On the other hand, critics argue that it is painful for the child, unnecessary and may adversely affect sexual pleasure and sensation.

Currently, the American Medical Association (AMA) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) do not recommend routine neonatal circumcision. Both professional organizations support parents in making an informed decision based on religious, cultural and personal preferences, since the medical evidence supporting the world's most common surgery is still being debated.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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