

## 10 REASONS NOT TO CIRCUMCISE YOUR BABY BOY

**1. *Because there is no medical reason for "routine" circumcision of baby boys.***

No professional medical association in the United States or the rest of the world recommends routine neonatal circumcision. The American Medical Association calls it "non-therapeutic." At no time in its 75 years has the American Academy of Pediatrics ever recommended infant circumcision.

**2. *Because the foreskin is not a birth defect.***

The foreskin is a normal, sensitive, functional part of the body. In infant boys, the foreskin is attached to the head of the penis (glans), protects it from urine, feces, and irritation, and keeps contaminants from entering the urinary tract. The foreskin also has an important role in sexual pleasure, due to its specialized, erogenous nerve endings and its natural gliding and lubricating functions.

**3. *Because you wouldn't circumcise your baby girl.***

In the United States, girls of all ages are protected by federal and state laws from forced genital surgery<sup>1</sup>, whether practiced in medical or non-medical settings, and regardless of the religious or cultural preferences of their parents. There is no ethical rationale for distinguishing between female and male genital alteration. If it is wrong to remove part of a baby girl's healthy genitals, then it is wrong to do the same to those of a baby boy.

**4. *Because your baby does not want to be circumcised.***

Circumcision painfully and permanently alters a baby boy's genitals, removing healthy, protective, functional tissue from the penis and exposing the child to unnecessary pain and medical risks –for no medical benefit. What do you think your baby boy would say if he could tell you?

**5. *Because circumcision is painful, risky and harmful.***

We know babies are sensitive to pain. Many circumcisions are performed with no analgesic, but even when pain control is employed, the pain is not eliminated. As with any surgery, complications can and do occur with circumcision. These include infection, abnormal bleeding, removal of too much skin, loss of all or part of the glans, urinary problems, and even death. All circumcisions result in the loss of the foreskin and its functions, and leave a penile scar.

**6. *Because times and attitudes have changed.***

The circumcision rate in the United States. Is now about 55% (and much lower in some parts of the country), down from 81% in 1981. Nearly half of all baby boys in the U.S. leave the hospital intact.

**7. *Because most medically advanced nations do not circumcise babies.***

People in Europe, Asia and Latin America are often appalled to hear that American doctors and hospitals remove part of a boy's penis shortly after birth. Approximately 75% of the men in the world are not circumcised and remain intact throughout their lives.

**8. *Because caring for and cleaning the foreskin is easy.***

A natural, intact penis requires no special care, beyond gentle washing while bathing. Later, when the foreskin can be retracted (something that often does not occur until adolescence), a boy can be taught to pull back his foreskin to wash his penis. Forcible retraction of the foreskin results in pain and injury, and should not be done.

**9. *Because circumcision does not prevent HIV or other diseases.***

Over the years, the claims that circumcision prevents various diseases have repeatedly been proven to be exaggerated or outright fabrications. Most men in the United States are circumcised, but our STD rates are as high as or higher than those in countries where circumcision is rare.

**10. *Because children should be protected from permanent bodily alteration inflicted on them without their consent in the name of culture, religion, profit, or parental preference.***

Under accepted bioethical principles, parents can consent to surgery on behalf of a child **only** if it is necessary to protect the child's life or health. "Routine" circumcision fails this test because it painfully and permanently removes a normal and healthy part of a boy's penis, does not protect the child's life or health, and in fact creates new risks. Removing the foreskin is no more justified than removing a finger or any other healthy body part.