

Circumcision FAQs



Why is a circumcision performed?

Circumcision is a religious or cultural ritual for many Jewish and Islamic families, as well as certain aboriginal tribes in Africa and Australia. Circumcision can also be a matter of family tradition, personal hygiene or preventive healthcare.

Sometimes there's a medical need for circumcision, such as when the foreskin is too tight to be pulled back (*retracted*) over the glans. In other cases, particularly in parts of Africa, circumcision is recommended for older boys or men to reduce the risk of certain sexually transmitted infections.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says the benefits of circumcision outweigh the risks. However, the AAP doesn't recommend routine circumcision for all male newborns. Instead, it leaves the decision up to parents — and supports use of anesthetics for infants who have the procedure.

What are the potential health benefits of circumcision?

- Easier hygiene. Circumcision makes it simpler to wash the penis. However, boys with uncircumcised penises can be taught to wash regularly beneath the foreskin.
- Decreased risk of urinary tract infections. The risk of urinary tract infections in males is low, but these infections are more common in uncircumcised males. Severe infections early in life can lead to kidney problems later.
- Decreased risk of sexually transmitted infections. Circumcised men might have a lower risk of certain sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Still, safe sexual practices remain essential.
- Prevention of penile problems. Occasionally, the foreskin on an uncircumcised penis can be difficult or impossible to retract (*phimosis*). This can lead to inflammation of the foreskin or head of the penis.
- Decreased risk of penile cancer. Although cancer of the penis is rare, it's less common in circumcised men. In addition, cervical cancer is less common in the female sexual partners of circumcised men.



What about non-circumcision risks?

The risks of not being circumcised are not only rare, but avoidable with proper care of the penis. Also, circumcision might not be an option when certain blood-clotting disorders are present, for premature babies who still require medical care in the hospital nursery, or for babies born with abnormalities of the penis.

What are the surgical risks?

The most common complications associated with circumcision are bleeding and infection. Side effects related to anesthesia are possible as well. Rarely, circumcision might result in foreskin problems such as:

- The foreskin might be cut too short or too long.
- The foreskin might fail to heal properly.
- The remaining foreskin might reattach to the end of the penis, requiring minor surgical repair.

What should I expect?

- Before circumcision, the doctor will explain the risks and benefits to you.
- Newborn circumcision is often done in the hospital nursery, or at your baby's first pediatrician visit usually within 10 days after birth.
- For newborn circumcision, your son will lie on his back with his arms and legs restrained. After the penis and surrounding area are cleansed, an anesthetic will be injected into the base of the penis or applied to the penis as a cream. A special clamp or plastic ring will be attached to the penis, and the foreskin will be removed.
- Afterward, the penis will be covered with an ointment, such as a topical antibiotic or petroleum jelly, and wrapped loosely with gauze. The procedure generally takes about 10 minutes.

Circumcision is similar for older boys and adults. However, when done later in life, the procedure might require the use of general anesthesia, recovery might take longer, and the risk of complications could be greater.

Who can perform the circumcision?

At Texas Health Mansfield Hospital, circumcisions can be performed by a skilled hospitalist, pediatrician or specialist such as a general surgeon or urologist. They can also be performed by a nurse practitioner or physician assistant under the direction of a physician.

What are the costs?

Please contact your insurance provider to see if circumcisions are covered under your insurance plan. The average out-of-pocket cost for a hospitalist to perform this procedure is \$159.

To learn more about the circumcision services offered by Texas Health Mansfield, please call **682.341.5400**.