

Circumcision in men

Male circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin.

The foreskin is the retractable fold of skin that covers the end of the penis. It's a continuation of the skin that covers the whole penis.

You might need a circumcision for:

- medical reasons
- religious and cultural reasons
- HIV and cancer prevention

We have a separate guide to [circumcision in boys](#).

Medical reasons

You may be considering circumcision for a medical reason. If so, talk to your GP or specialist.

Circumcision is sometimes considered a treatment option for some conditions. This is usually when other treatments have not worked.

These conditions include:

- tight foreskin (phimosis)
- paraphimosis
- recurrent balanitis
- balanitis xerotica obliterans

Religious and cultural reasons

Circumcision is a common practice in the Jewish and Islamic communities. It's also practiced by many African communities.

If you wish to have a circumcision for religious or cultural reasons, speak to your GP.

Circumcision should not be performed by unqualified practitioners. You could be seriously harmed if the procedure is not done correctly.

Circumcision - the procedure

Circumcision is usually carried out on a day patient basis. Most patients do not have to stay in hospital overnight.

Before having a circumcision

You'll need to fast for 6 hours before surgery. You'll also be asked to sign a consent form to confirm you agree to the surgery.

You'll usually be given a full general anaesthetic. This means you'll be unconscious throughout the procedure.

During a circumcision

Circumcision involves removing the foreskin behind the head of the penis. This is done using a scalpel or surgical scissors.

Any bleeding can be stopped using heat treatment (diathermy) or stitches. The remaining edges of skin are then stitched together using dissolvable stitches.

After a circumcision

You may have some discomfort and swelling around the head of your penis for a few days after the operation.

Your care team will give you painkilling medication, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

They will also give you a phone number to call if you have any problems. They will tell you when your follow-up appointment is. This may be at the hospital or with your GP.

You should not feel any pain or discomfort while passing urine. Contact your medical team if you do.

Contact your GP if you have:

- a temperature
- increased redness
- bleeding
- persistent pain
- throbbing of your penis

Any of these could be a sign of infection.

Recovering after a circumcision

You'll be given information about your recovery. This will include when you can drive, return to work and have sex.

Applying vaseline around the tip of your penis will stop it sticking to your underwear. Wearing light, loose-fitting clothing for 2 or 3 days will also help avoid irritation.

Sex

It usually takes at least 10 days for your penis to heal after circumcision. You should avoid having sex for at least 4 weeks after your operation.

Driving

You will need to make sure that you are fit to drive after having surgery. After longer surgery or procedures requiring general anaesthesia, it may not be safe to drive for 24 hours or more.

Risks of a circumcision procedure

Complications after circumcisions carried out for medical reasons are rare. Most men do not experience any problems.

Apart from the initial swelling, bleeding and infection are the most common problems. There's between a 1 in 10 and a 1 in 50 chance that you'll experience bleeding or infection.

Other possible complications of circumcision can include:

- permanent reduction in sensation in the head of the penis, particularly during sex
- tenderness around the scar
- the need to remove stitches that haven't dissolved
- you may need another operation to remove some more skin

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