

North Carolina Women's Hospital

Caring for Your Uncircumcised Son

Many parents who choose not to circumcise their son do not have experience caring for a foreskin because medical opinion and practice has changed over the years. We at the North Carolina Women's and Children's Hospitals want to give you accurate information about how to care for your son if you have chosen to leave him intact.

What is a foreskin for?

The foreskin is the skin that covers the glans (head or tip) of the penis. It is double sided, like an eyelid, so that the inside can slide easily over the tip of the penis, while the outside provides protection. There are also cells in the foreskin that produce proteins that fight viruses and bacteria. The foreskin has thousands of nerve endings, including some of the most sexually sensitive areas on the male penis, so it plays a big role in sexual sensitivity in men. Most of the time the foreskin covers the glans of the penis, but during sexual arousal it pulls back.

Do I ever need to pull the foreskin back?

NO, it is very important that you do not ever force your son's foreskin back. Retracting (or pulling back) a foreskin can cause severe pain, bleeding, scarring, and may lead to infections or adhesions (places where scarring connects the foreskin to the head of the penis). At birth, the foreskin is connected to the head of the penis like a fingernail. Over time, it will separate. When the process is complete, your son will be able to retract his foreskin on his own. This happens sometime between 6 months old and puberty.

Should the doctors or nurses pull back my son's foreskin?

No, doctors or nurses should not pull back your son's foreskin.

What do I do if the foreskin gets pulled back and it won't return to its normal position?

Use water to moisten the head of the penis and the foreskin. Squeeze the tip with your fingers to make it small enough for the foreskin to slide back into its forward position. If this does not work, call your doctor's office right away.

How do I wash my son?

There is no special care needed to bathe a boy with a foreskin. Simply wash the *outside* of his penis with warm water and a mild soap. Sometimes soaps or bubble baths can cause irritation or redness. If this happens, stop using them and just use warm, clear water. Once your son is able to pull back his own foreskin, he can be taught to gently pull it back during bathing, rinse himself, and return it to its forward position.

My son's foreskin balloon's out when he urinates (pees). Is this a problem?

Although this can look unusual to parents who are seeing it for the first time, this is normal. As long as your son is not in pain and his urine is free flowing, you do not need to worry about this.

How will I know if there is an infection?

If your son has an infection, the foreskin will become red and itchy or cause him pain. He may also have pain with urination. The most common causes are yeast or a urinary tract infection. Both of them can be easily and quickly treated. Call your doctor's office if you are worried about infection.

Is it possible that my son might need a circumcision later in life?

Rarely a problem develops that may need to be fixed with circumcision. However sometimes there are less invasive treatments, such as steroid creams or antibiotics that can be used instead. Be sure to explore all of your son's options before making a decision.