

Care of the Uncircumcised Penis

If the skin at the end of a penis (foreskin) has not been surgically removed (circumcised), it's important to know how to care for the uncircumcised penis. Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about the foreskin and how to clean the foreskin and penis.

About the Foreskin

At birth, the foreskin is attached to the head of the penis and cannot be pulled back. The age at which the foreskin separates differs for each child. Rarely this process takes a few weeks, but more often it takes months or years. Once the foreskin separates, the foreskin can be pulled back away from the tip of the penis. This is called *foreskin retraction*.

Foreskin retraction should never be forced. Until the foreskin fully separates, it shouldn't be pulled back. Forcing the foreskin to retract before it is ready can cause severe pain, bleeding, and tears in the skin.

How to Clean the Foreskin and Penis

- **Before the foreskin has separated**—In the first few months, clean your baby's foreskin and penis with warm water. Cotton swabs or antiseptics are not needed. *Do not pull back the foreskin.*
- **After the foreskin has separated**—Teach your children how to clean their foreskin. Before puberty, they should occasionally clean under the foreskin. During puberty, they should clean under the foreskin when showering or bathing.
 - Gently pull the foreskin back away from the end of the penis.
 - Rinse underneath the foreskin with warm water.
 - Pull the foreskin back over the penis.
 - Clean the penis with warm water, and, if needed, use mild soap. If you use soap, avoid contact with the opening of the penis and rinse the penis well.

Note: White, pearl-like lumps under the foreskin are typical. It's also typical to see a thick, white or yellowish substance under the foreskin and near the penis. This substance is called *smegma*. Smegma is a collection of dead cells, oils, and other fluids. A buildup of smegma can lead to foul odor or skin irritation. Rinse smegma off with warm water, or gently wipe it off with warm water and a washcloth.

When to Call Your Baby's Doctor

If the hole in the foreskin is not large enough for your baby to urinate as expected (see signs below), call your baby's doctor.

- The urine stream is never more than a trickle.
- Your baby seems uncomfortable while urinating.
- The foreskin is red or swollen.

For More Information

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org and www.HealthyChildren.org

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

In all aspects of its publishing program (writing, review, and production), the AAP is committed to promoting principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

