



Circumcision

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions that you/ your child may have about their operation. You will also have an opportunity to discuss any further queries or concerns with hospital staff on admission.

A general anaesthetic requires your child to be starved beforehand.

Morning admission:

Last food: 2.30am

Breastfeed: 4.30am

Water or weak squash until 7.30am

Afternoon admission:

Last food: 7.30am

Breastfeed: 9.30am

Water or weak squash until 12.30pm

Please be aware that milk and chewing gum is considered food.

If you do not follow these instructions your child's procedure may be delayed or even cancelled.

What is circumcision?

It is the removal of the foreskin from the end of the penis.

Why does my child need this?

The most common reason is because of tightness (phimosis) and possibly due to pain or difficulty passing urine.

What are the alternatives?

For a child experiencing problems, if the condition was left untreated, these problems would persist, and may get worse. A smaller operation (preputioplasty) on the foreskin is possible in some cases.

What are the risks?

The commonest complications are bleeding from the site of the operation, infection and narrowing of the hole through which the urine passes. Rarely, too much or too little skin can be removed. Bleeding usually stops, but occasionally will require a further operation. Infection is not common but requires treatment with antibiotics. Difficulty passing urine after the operation, due to narrowing of the hole, is unusual but may be more common when there is a scarring process of the foreskin called BXO (Balanitis Xerotica Obliterans). These will be discussed with you by the doctor on the day of the operation.

Every anaesthetic carries a risk, but this is small. The anaesthetic will be given by an anaesthetist (a specially trained doctor). After having an anaesthetic some children may feel or be sick. They may have a headache, sore throat, feel dizzy or be upset. These side effects are usually not severe and are short-lived.

What does surgery involve?

The operation is done under general anaesthetic and lasts up to 30 minutes. Once your child is asleep, the surgeon will remove the foreskin, exposing the head of the penis. Dissolvable stitches are used.

What shall I bring?

Some children find it reassuring if they can bring a familiar toy from home. A play specialist may be involved in your child's care, and will be able to provide a range of suitable toys and activities. A hospital gown will be provided to wear to theatre; however, children may want their own nightwear, slippers and dressing gown to change into.

What happens on admission?

The surgeon will explain the procedure to you on the ward, and can discuss any worries that you may have. An anaesthetist will also visit you to explain the anaesthetic. Your child may also have 'magic cream' (local anaesthetic) applied to the back of their hands so that the anaesthetic injection will be less painful.

One parent / carer will be able to accompany your child to the anaesthetic room and stay with them until they are asleep.

What happens afterwards?

After the operation your child will be taken into the recovery room to wake up. Once they are sufficiently recovered, you may be able to accompany the nurse to collect them and bring them back to the ward. Some children can wake up crying because of the strange environment. It does not mean they are in pain. Children are given pain relief during their operation. If necessary, further pain relief will be given on the ward. It is possible that your child may vomit following surgery – medicine can be given to relieve this if the vomiting persists.

When can we go home?

Your child may go home when both you and the staff are happy that they have recovered sufficiently. They should be awake and comfortable, and have eaten and drunk a small amount. We will also check that your child can pass urine before they will be allowed home.

Advice at home after circumcision

- Your child will need regular pain relief (e.g. paracetamol and ibuprofen) – please make sure you have some, and follow the instructions on the packaging.
- During the operation a local anaesthetic is used to numb the area, and this usually lasts for 4-6 hours after the surgery.
- The wound is likely to be swollen and may ooze slightly. This should subside in 2 to 3 days.

- The stitches are dissolvable – and will disappear on their own in around 2 weeks.
- In some boys, the foreskin becomes stuck to the penis and has to be cut away during surgery. If this proves necessary, a scab may form over the tip of the penis. This can look somewhat alarming but will get better without intervention in about 3 weeks.
- We advise that your child has a plain bath or shower for no more than 10 minutes at least twice a day for 3-4 days starting the day after surgery. Avoid using bubbles and perfumed soaps.
- Loose underwear and trousers such as tracksuit / pyjama bottoms should be worn for comfort. If your child is in nappies, frequent changing is necessary. Avoid using baby wipes.
- Please encourage your child to drink lots for 24 hours following the operation – as this will help to dilute their urine, so it will sting less when they pass urine.
- One week off school is usually sufficient for recovery; however, avoid sports for 3 weeks, to ensure a complete recovery.
- Please contact the ward or your GP if your child develops symptoms of infection (e.g. fever, irritability).

Contacting us

Pre-op nurse: 0118 322 7518

Kempton DBU: 0118 322 7512

Paediatric Unit: 0118 322 8075

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Paediatric Unit, February 2025

Next review due: February 2027