



Pediatric Clinic

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

## CARE OF THE UNCIRCUMCISED PENIS

At birth, the penis consists of a tubular shaft with a rounded end called the glans. The entire penis (shaft and glans) is covered by a layer of skin. The section of the penile skin that covers the glans is called the foreskin (for'skin). The foreskin is made of two layers. One is the outer foreskin. The other is an inner lining similar to that which is inside your mouth.

### THE FUNCTION OF THE FORESKIN:

The glans at birth is delicate and easily irritated by urine and stool. The foreskin covers the glans. When a boy is circumcised (ser'kum sized) this covering is lost. In this case, the glans and urine opening may become irritated. Such problems almost never occur in the uncircumcised penis.

### INFANT SMEGMA:

Skin cells from the glans of the penis and the inner lining are shed throughout life. Natural skin shedding in childhood serves to separate the foreskin from the glans. Since this shedding takes place in a closed space, the shed skin cells cannot escape easily. They work their way to the tip of the foreskin. These skin cells make up what is called infant smegma (smeg'mu). They look like white cheesy "pearls".

### FORESKIN AND PENIS CARE:

The care of the foreskin is easy. The infant should be bathed or sponged clean, and all body parts should be washed, including the genitals. The uncircumcised penis is easy to keep clean. You should NOT pull back on any part of the skin in order to wash underneath it. There is no need for special cleaning with Q-tips or antiseptics. Soap and water used to clean the outside is all that is needed.

### FORESKIN RETRACTION:

Before birth, the foreskin and glans develop as one tissue. The foreskin is fused to the glans. Over time, the inner surface of the foreskin separates from the glans. It should not be forced. Separation may take weeks, months, or even years. This is normal. Most foreskins will retract (push back away from the glans) by age five, but there is no need for concern even after a longer period. Some boys' foreskin will not be able to be retracted until the teenage years.

### CLEANING THE FULLY RETRACTED FORESKIN:

For the first few years, an occasional retraction (not forced) with cleansing beneath is enough. At puberty, a boy should be taught to retract the foreskin and clean beneath it during his daily bath.

### SUMMARY:

Care of the uncircumcised boy is easy. For infants, washing and rinsing the outside on a daily basis is enough. Do not retract (push back) the foreskin of an infant. Forcing the foreskin back may harm the penis, cause pain, bleeding, and scar tissue. The natural separation of the foreskin from the glans may take many years. Once the separation does occur, an occasional retraction with cleaning is advised. Once a boy reaches puberty, he should be taught to retract the foreskin and cleanse under it on a daily basis.