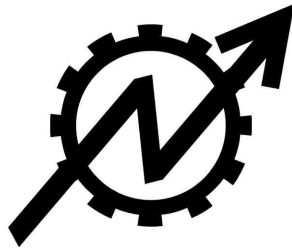


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Jonathan Friedman
Genital Autonomy: Why Circumcision Must Be Stopped
Available at: QuestionCircumcision.org

GENITAL AUTONOMY

WHY CIRCUMCISION MUST BE STOPPED



By Jonathan Friedman

ORGANIZATIONS

NOCIRC - National Organization of Circumcision Information
Resource Centers
<http://nocirc.org>

Attorneys for the Rights of the Child - Safeguarding Children's
Bodily Integrity
<http://arclaw.org>

Intact America
<http://intactamerica.org>
<http://twitter.com/intactamerica>

IntactNews
<http://intactnews.org>
<http://twitter.com/intactnewsorg>

Genital Autonomy
<http://genitalautonomy.eu>

Intactipedia
<http://intactipedia.org>

Circleaks
<http://circleaks.org>

RESOURCES

FURTHER RESEARCH

“Fine-touch pressure thresholds in the adult penis” - Sorrells et al
Citation: Young, H. (2007), Fine-touch pressure thresholds in the adult penis. BJU International, 100: 699.

“The Prepuce” - Cold & Taylor
Citation: Cold CJ, Taylor JR. The prepuce. BJU Int 1999;83 Suppl. 1:34-44.

Lost Boys: An Estimate of U.S. Circumcision-Related Infant Deaths

Citation: Bollinger, Dan. Lost Boys: An Estimate of U.S. Circumcision-Related Infant Deaths. THYMOS: Journal of Boyhood Studies. Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 2010, 78-90

“Circumcision: The Elephant in the Hospital”
Presentation by Ryan McAllister at Georgetown University, 2011
<http://tiny.cc/hospitalcircumcision>

CIRP - Circumcision Information Resource Pages
<http://cirp.org>

James Loewen - Videographer, Documentarian
<http://youtube.com/user/bonobo3d>

CUT: Slicing through the myths of circumcision
<http://cutthefilm.com>
(free abridged version on the website)

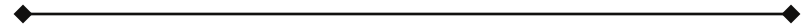
“Circumcision is Bullshit”
Penn & Teller's Bullshit. Season 3, Episode 1. Comedy Central.

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practice. Doctors are also beginning to take action to stop male circumcision. In 2011, the Royal Dutch Medical Association announced a campaign to stop circumcision. Since 2007, all Australian hospitals banned non-therapeutic circumcisions. Swedish and Finnish doctors and parliamentarians have also called for a ban on circumcision.

For far too long, experts and authority figures have inflicted great harm. Mass education about genital anatomy and the effects and harms of forced genital cutting must be used to stop this practice. It is time to stop all forms of unnecessary genital surgery, for males, females, and the intersex.



Many Christians also perform circumcision for religious reasons, although the Catholic Church has a strong stance against the practice. Recently, new allegations have emerged of the Dutch Catholic Church castrating boys after the boys reported sexual abuse by priests. Government officials were present at meetings and consented to castrating the boys without parental consent as a cure for homosexuality.

Muslims do not have a religious mandate to perform male or female circumcision, yet performing circumcision as a measure of chastity is strongly promoted.

SEXUAL MOTIVATIONS

There is a growing movement of individuals, including researchers, who promote circumcision for sexual reasons. There are organizations and websites devoted to circumcision fetishes, and these enjoy the support of some well-known circumcision researchers. While historically circumcision was performed to denude the penis, members of this group claim that circumcision increases sexual pleasure, and have even published surveys in scientific journals. This group is also involved in promoting circumcision for medical reasons, including prevention of HIV, HPV (human papillomavirus), urinary tract infections, prostate cancer, bathroom splatter and zipper injury (see: **CIRCUMCISION IN THE UNITED STATES**, p.11).

AFTERWORD

Forced genital cutting is an attack on individual autonomy; it should be up to an individual to decide what they do with their body. Circumcision is a dangerous procedure that denudes the genitals, and diminishes sexual pleasure for a person and their partners.

There have been many successful campaigns in Africa to end female circumcision. Most recently, Liberians have halted the

INTRODUCTION

Circumcision is the most commonly performed surgical procedure in the United States. It is medically unnecessary in over 99% of cases. Circumcision is performed for a variety of reasons, including financial, medical, cultural, social, religious and sexual reasons. This text will explain the normal functioning penis, the procedure, effects and history of circumcision, it will analyze the current state of this practice and will make the argument for why circumcision, and all forms of forced genital cutting, must be stopped. While efforts were made to cite sources, everyone is encouraged to do their own research.

THE NATURAL PENIS

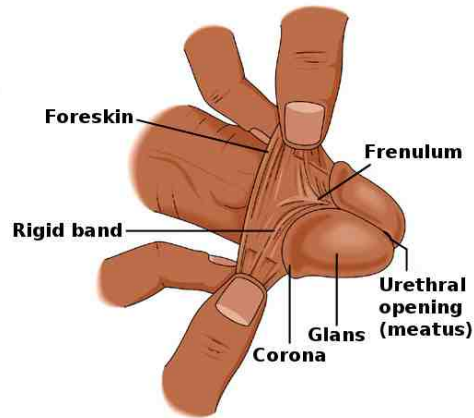
All mammals have a foreskin. In females the foreskin is called the clitoral hood. In males, the foreskin is an extension of the penile shaft skin that forms a double layer of skin over the head of the penis. At birth, the foreskin is fused to the head of the penis by a membrane, similar to the membrane that attaches fingernails to fingers. In boys, the foreskin can become fully retractable anywhere from 2 to 22 years of age.



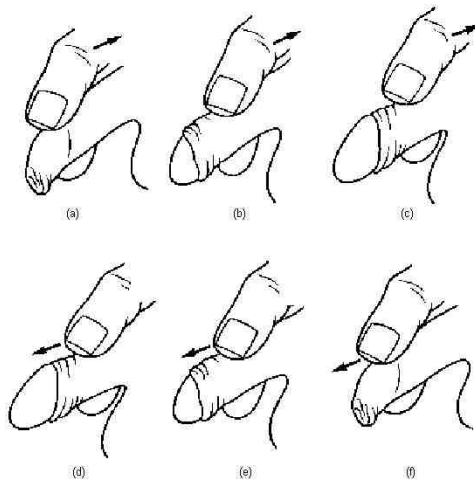
The male (left) and female (right) clitoris/penis and prepuce are analogous and homologous organs throughout life. During the first trimester, they are also visually the same. Both are natural, normal, purposeful body organs that equally contribute to the health, functioning, and well-being of their owner.

The foreskin serves several functions. It protects the head of the penis, keeping it clean, soft, moist, warm, and sensitive, similar to the function of the eyelids. The foreskin also keeps the opening of urethra at a distance from the outside environment by providing a physical barrier which blocks the opening of the urinary tract. In babies this prevents contact with feces and urine in diapers. Traces of urea (the main waste component in urine) are absent in the foreskin.

Glands in the foreskin produce antibacterial and antiviral proteins, including lysozyme, found in tears and mother's milk. The foreskin also contains Langerhans cells which produce additional pathogen-fighting secretions. Combined with dead skin cells and oils, this collection of secretions is known as smegma. Smegma is found in all animals, including female animals, and helps keep the genitals clean. It also serves as a lubricant.



In an adult male, the foreskin comprises about 50% of the penile skin. It contains numerous structures, including the rigid band and frenulum (see diagram below), both of which are muscular and highly innervated. The foreskin contains tens of thousands of fine-touch nerve endings, about 75% of the nerve endings in the penis, and is the primary erotogenic center of the male body. The frenulum connects the shaft skin with the head of the penis, and allows the foreskin to spring back after retraction. (Cold & Taylor, Sorrels et al). During vaginal intercourse, the ridged band provides additional pleasure for females by massaging the base of the clitoris (the concept behind ribbed condoms).



lower risk of prostate cancer. The study contains a small sample size, and does not control for more significant factors such as race/nationality and smoker/non-smoker. Masturbation and eating lycopene (found in tomatoes) has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

SOCIAL MOTIVATIONS

In the United States, circumcision is most commonly performed for social reasons. Parents often have their children circumcised because: they want their son to “look like daddy,” they don't want their son to be ridiculed in the locker room, they don't want their son's future sexual partners to ridicule them, or they don't want to deal with pressure from family and friends.

Parents also request forced genital cutting and genital alteration surgeries on intersex children to conform to cultural norms.

CULTURAL MOTIVATIONS

Circumcision continues to be practiced in many indigenous cultures, from the Middle East to Africa to Oceania. Circumcision is often a rite of manhood for males, and, similarly, a rite of womanhood for females (see: **ANTHROPOLOGY OF CIRCUMCISION**, p.9).

RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS

Circumcision continues to be performed for religious reasons amongst Jews only. Circumcision is perceived as the defining characteristic of male Jewishness, although this is strongly debated. According to modern interpretations of Jewish law, there are no consequences to letting a child grow to adulthood and allowing them the choice of circumcision. There is also a growing movement of Jews who perform a *bris* ceremony without the cutting. This is called *bris shalom* (covenant of peace) or *bris b'lee milah* (covenant without the cutting). This ceremony is essentially the same as the naming ceremony for girls.

MEDICAL MOTIVATIONS

Circumcision is rarely performed for legitimate medical reasons. Miseducated doctors often amputate the foreskin for minor ailments such as urinary tract infections and phimosis. Doctors also perform circumcision with the belief that circumcised penises are more hygienic and reduce the chances of contracting a sexually transmitted disease.

CIRCUMCISION AND HIV

A group of circumcision advocates (doctors, researchers, and others) have been promoting circumcision for HIV prevention since the 1980s. Presently, millions of dollars in humanitarian aid is being spent on mass circumcision programs in Africa in the name of HIV prevention.

No plausible explanation for the alleged link between circumcision and HIV has been put forth. The basis for circumcision as an HIV preventative measure is disputed. Numerous critics have pointed to flaws in three African clinical trials that form the basis of the belief that circumcision prevents HIV. All three trials were terminated early and billed as successes. These trials studied female-to-male transmission of HIV, yet follow-up studies by the same group of researchers found that circumcision increases male-to-female transmission of HIV.

Real-world data also conflicts with the argument that circumcision prevents HIV. The United States, one of the most industrially advanced countries in the world, has one of the highest rates of HIV and circumcision. In many European countries where circumcision is rare, HIV is also rare.

CIRCUMCISION AND PROSTATE CANCER

Recently, circumcision advocates have published a study in *Cancer* on the link between circumcision and prostate cancer. The researchers of this study claim a link between circumcision and a

MEDICAL PROBLEMS

Some ailments that can afflict an intact penis include phimosis, paraphimosis and urinary tract infections. Phimosis is the condition where a mature male cannot retract their foreskin. This can be treated non-surgically by manual tugging alone, or in combination with the use of topical steroid creams, or with preputioplasty. Paraphimosis is the condition where the foreskin gets stuck behind the head of the penis, causing pain and blockage of blood flow. This can be treated by pushing the head of the penis back into the foreskin or by making small surgical cuts around the foreskin. Urinary tract infections are easily treatable with antibiotics. (Studies show that girls are 2-8 times more likely to get urinary tract infections than boys, yet doctors don't cut vulvas to prevent recurrence.)

A common misconception amongst doctors, nurses, parents and others not familiar with the natural penis is that the foreskin is supposed to be retractable from birth. This is false. The foreskin is attached to the head of the penis from birth by a membrane similar to the membrane attaching fingernails. There have been numerous cases (lawsuits, even) of people forcibly retracting a boy's foreskin, causing bleeding and infection.

THE CIRCUMCISION PROCEDURE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

THE CIRCUMCISION PROCEDURE

Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin. Circumcision in the United States is typically performed in hospitals on newborns, mostly by obstetricians and gynecologists (women's health specialists), or outside the hospital in religious ceremonies. Due to health risks, newborns cannot be given general anesthesia, erection suppressants, or pain medication.





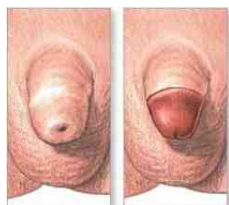
In newborns, the boy is strapped down to a device known as a Circumstraint. The doctor then inserts a blunt instrument in between the foreskin and the head of the penis, and rips apart the connecting membrane. A circumcision device is then clamped to the foreskin, which is

pulled up through the clamp and away from the head of the penis, and is then sliced off with a scalpel.

EFFECTS

Immediate effects of circumcision include severe psychological trauma (babies go into shock and refuse to nurse following the surgery), hemorrhage, infection, partial or total amputation of the penis (one circumcision device known as the Mogen clamp has been sued out of business for its high accident rate, yet it is still in common use), and even death.

It is estimated that over 100 newborns die per year in the United States after undergoing circumcision (Bollinger). Deaths due to circumcision are difficult to monitor, as the death certificates rarely mention circumcision. (There is an ongoing investigation into a September 2011 newborn circumcision death at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. Other known circumcision deaths in 2011 include a newborn in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a 2-year-old in Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, New York.)



Circumcision removes the most sensitive parts of the penis and damages the perineal nerve, involved in sexual pleasure, which degenerates throughout life. The head of the penis, meant to be internal, is externalized through circumcision, dries out and calluses over throughout life, leading to decreased sensitivity. Circumcision also

In females, the author has found the application of pure carbolic acid to the clitoris an excellent means of allaying the abnormal excitement, and preventing the recurrence of the practice in those whose will-power has become so weakened that the patient is unable to exercise entire self-control. (p 297)

As late as the 1950s, medical researchers were confirming that circumcision prevents masturbation. While female circumcision was banned in the U.S. in 1996, male circumcision continues to be supported.

CIRCUMCISION IN THE PRESENT DAY

Worldwide, 85-90% of males are intact. Less than 50% of newborn boys are routinely circumcised in U.S. hospitals, and the functions of the foreskin are absent in the medical literature. Circumcision continues to be performed for financial, medical, social, cultural, religious and sexual reasons.

FINANCIAL MOTIVATIONS

Circumcision is a multi-billion dollar industry. Those performing circumcisions collect a fee ranging from \$400-\$1,600. Some States in the U.S. provide Medicaid coverage for circumcision, although 18 States have now dropped coverage. Foreskin tissues contain a relatively high proportion of stem cells and are often sold to biomedical companies for research. Foreskin tissues are stretched in a lab and grown into skin grafts. One foreskin can be grown to the size of a football field, and can generate an estimated \$100,000 in profits. Foreskin tissues are also used in cosmetic products such as SkinMedica's TNS Recovery Complex, which contains "human fibroblast" cells derived from infant foreskins. This product was featured on Oprah Winfrey's television show, and both Oprah and Barbara Walters are users of this product.



era. This era was characterized by an extreme aversion to sexuality. Along with a series of anti-masturbation devices (many of which have U.S. patents), circumcision gained popularity as an anti-masturbation technique, a sexual repression method for adolescents and adults.

Doctors claimed circumcision as a cure-all for a long list of diseases and ailments including masturbation, black-on-white rape, epilepsy, convulsions, paralysis, elephantiasis, tuberculosis, eczema, bed-wetting, hip-joint disease, fecal incontinence, rectal prolapse, wet dreams, hernia, headaches, nervousness, hysteria, poor eyesight, idiocy, mental retardation, insanity, strabismus, hydrocephalus, clubfoot, cancer, sexually-transmitted infections and urinary tract infections.

One such doctor, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (the co-inventor of cornflakes, which, like graham crackers and granola, was designed to inhibit sexuality) advocated for the circumcision of boys and poured acid on the clitoris of girls as a punishment for masturbation. In his book, "Plain facts for old and young: embracing the natural history and hygiene of organic life," he wrote on preventing masturbation:

Covering the organs with a cage has been practiced with entire success. A remedy which is almost always successful in small boys is circumcision, especially when there is any degree of phimosis. The operation should be performed by a surgeon without administering an anæsthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have a salutary effect upon the mind, especially if it be connected with the idea of punishment, as it may well be in some cases. The soreness which continues for several weeks interrupts the practice, and if it had not previously become too firmly fixed, it may be forgotten and not resumed. If any attempt is made to watch the child, he should be so carefully surrounded by vigilance that he cannot possibly transgress without detection. If he is only partially watched, he soon learns to elude observation, and thus the effect is only to make him cunning in his vice. (p. 295)

and:

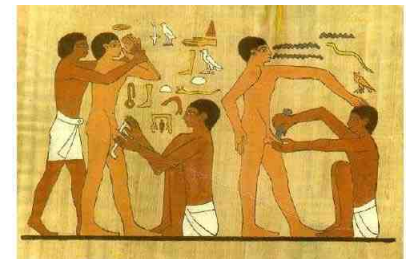
removes about 50% of the penile shaft skin, which destroys the gliding function of the penis, and leaves a scar ring around the shaft of the penis.

Common complaints from circumcised men about their penises are that their shaft skin is too tight, making erections, sex and masturbation painful, and that hair rides up onto their shaft from their groin during erections, also causing pain and discomfort during sex and masturbation, including bleeding and chaffing. Since the gliding function of the penis is destroyed, men must resort to using lubrication for masturbation and sex. Another problem is lymphedema, a condition where part of the penis swells up with lymph fluid, which is especially common after adult circumcisions.

ANTHROPOLOGY OF CIRCUMCISION

MIDDLE EAST

Circumcision is thought to have started in the Middle East with the Egyptians, although some evidence suggests that the practice started earlier. Slaves and priests were circumcised, and there is at least one image of a Pharaoh being circumcised. Females were



also circumcised for reasons of chastity. The most severe form of female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation, is called pharonic circumcision or infibulation, whereby the inner and outer labia are excised, as well as the clitoral hood and/or clitoris. The vagina is sewn shut with a small hole left to allow for urination and menstruation.

The Hebrews circumcised their boys at 8 days old. The Torah requires fathers to circumcise their sons, but eventually

circumcision experts known as *mohels* began performing circumcision. Originally, the ritual involved cutting off the tip of the foreskin (also known as the acroposthion) that extends beyond the head of the penis. In Hellenistic and Roman societies, Jewish men would stretch the remaining part of their foreskin with weights to assimilate, since social sporting events often included nudity. In response, the Jewish ruling class then instituted the complete ablation of the foreskin, making it virtually impossible to restore the foreskin.

Moses Maimonides, a 12th Century Jewish philosopher and doctor, wrote on the topic of circumcision in his "Guide to the Perplexed":

...with regard to circumcision, one of the reasons for it is, in my opinion, the wish to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible... The bodily pain caused to that member is the real purpose of circumcision. None of the activities necessary for the preservation of the individual is harmed thereby, nor is procreation rendered impossible, but violent concupiscence and lust that goes beyond what is needed are diminished. The fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable. For if at birth this member has been made to bleed and has had its covering taken away from it, it must indubitably be weakened. The Sages, may their memory be blessed, have explicitly stated: It is hard for a woman with whom an uncircumcised man has had sexual intercourse to separate from him. In my opinion this is the strongest of the reasons for circumcision. (Part III, Chapter 49)

An additional step to Jewish circumcision was later added, known as *metzitzah b'peh*, whereby the *mohel* sucks the blood from the baby's penis



after cutting off the foreskin.

Muslim circumcision is known as *sunat*. Boys are typically circumcised at about 8 years of age, though this can vary based on region. Boys are commonly circumcised at mass circumcision ceremonies as a coming-of-age ritual. The boys are awake during the procedure, and anesthetics are rarely used.



AFRICA

Circumcision is also practiced in many African regions. In South Africa, boys are taken into the bush in circumcision camps at 16 years old as a coming-of-age ritual. The boys are also awake during this procedure, and no anesthetics are used. There are frequent reports of gangrene, amputations, and about 30 deaths per year.



OCEANIA

Aboriginal peoples practice a form of male circumcision known as sub-incision. In addition to foreskin removal, the under-side of the penis is cut length-wise, exposing the urethra to the air. The blood is collected for ritual use. Sub-incision is typically performed at puberty. The boys are awake during the procedure, and receive no anesthetics.

CIRCUMCISION IN THE UNITED STATES

Circumcision began to see mass popularity in the United States beginning in the 1800s, a historical period known as the Victorian