

Q. I'm expecting a baby boy soon. What are the benefits to having him circumcised?

In the Midwest, about 74 percent of new parents choose to circumcise their infant boys. Some reasons parents choose circumcision include religious, cultural or hygiene factors. In the past, the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) has taken a neutral stance on circumcision. The organization encouraged parents to become educated about both the risks and benefits in order to make a decision that was right for their family.

After reviewing data from studies conducted between 1995 and 2010, the AAP has revised its policy. The new, more strongly worded statement goes a little further to say the benefits of circumcision clearly outweigh the risks.

Some of these benefits include:

- Decreased urinary tract infections during baby's first year
- Decreased risk of some cancers
- Reduced risk of transmitting and spreading HPV, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases

Pediatricians want every family to have access to the medical services they need. Currently 18 states do not cover circumcision under their Medicaid programs. It is the hope that AAP's support of circumcision will encourage insurance companies and Medicaid programs to provide coverage. But, for families that don't choose circumcision, the AAP still supports the importance of personal choice. Parents should have the right to weigh the religious, health and cultural implications and make the decision they are comfortable with.

Making the decision to circumcise or not may be one of the first medical decisions that new parents make. It is only natural they may feel concerned. The best approach is to do your homework and then talk with your doctor. Some things you may want to ask include what type of pain relief is used during the procedure, and how you should care for your baby's circumcised penis after the procedure. A great, informative website to check out is www.healthychildren.org.

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