



# circumcision

a lifetime of medical benefits



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## Newsletter: **Fewer Skin Disorders on Circumcised Penises**

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Infection of the penile foreskin and glans (balanoposthitis) is a painful and troublesome condition which effects about 2.5% of uncircumcised males, most often 2-5 years old, and is the commonest medical reason for performing circumcision after the newborn period. Recently British investigators, (Mallon et al., Arch Derm 2000) found that circumcision has a protective effect against many skin disorders in addition to penile cancer. Overall, uncircumcised males (average age 42 yrs) were 3 times as likely to get a wide variety of penile skin disorders. The most common of these were psoriasis and local infections. Other disorders more common in uncircumcised males were genital herpes, mollusca, candida, seborrheic dermatitis, lichen sclerosus, lichen planus, eczema and plasma cell balanitis.

In addition to the increased prevalence of skin disorders in uncircumcised males, the presence of a foreskin makes proper diagnosis more difficult. For instance, a plaque of psoriasis on an exposed glans is easily recognizable but loses its characteristic scale when covered by a foreskin.

The authors suggest a mechanism for this increased risk of skin disorders in uncircumcised men. The deep fold at the junction of the foreskin and penis (near the coronal sulcus) is subject to irritation from skin debris and glandular secretions, predisposing the region to skin disorders.

This convincing evidence adds to an increasing body of data on the multiple medical benefits of circumcision. These include prevention of infant kidney infection, infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, penile cancer, and cervical cancer in the female sexual partner of uncircumcised men.

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