



Kiwi Pediatrics

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How to clean an uncircumcised penis

Do not force the foreskin back over the tip of the penis.

At first, a baby's foreskin can't be pulled back (retracted) over the head of the penis. After the first few years of life (though it may take somewhat longer), the foreskin will gradually retract more easily. By the time a boy is 5 years old, his foreskin is usually fully retractable. Up to this time, wash the outside of the penis with warm water. Pushing your son's foreskin back too early can damage it and cause scar tissue to form.

When the foreskin is easy to retract, clean under it daily. To clean under the foreskin, gently push it as far as possible toward the body. Carefully wash the entire area with warm water. Then replace the foreskin over the head of the penis.

A boy as young as 3 can be taught to clean under his foreskin as a normal part of his hygiene. When a boy reaches puberty, he needs to clean under his foreskin every day.

If your son's foreskin does not fully retract by the time he reaches puberty, call your doctor for advice.

What happens if someone retracts (pulls back) my son's foreskin too early?

Forcing the foreskin back before the natural separation of the foreskin from the glans has occurred causes tearing of the connective tissue. This is painful and can lead to problems:

- tearing the foreskin from the head of the penis leaves an open wound which can lead to infection
- the raw surfaces touching each other can heal together and form adhesions (areas that stick together) between the foreskin and the head of the penis leading to permanent problems with retraction (pulling back)
- small tears in the opening of the foreskin can heal to form non-elastic (non-stretchable) scar tissue, possibly causing acquired narrowing (phimosis)
- the foreskin can get "stuck" behind the head of the penis (paraphimosis)

Balanitis

Sometimes the tip of the foreskin becomes reddened. This indicates the penis is irritated and the foreskin is doing its job of protecting the sensitive head of the penis and the opening in the penis where urine comes out (urinary meatus). If children are still in diapers it may be part of diaper rash. When bacteria in the stool react with urine, they produce ammonia, which burns the skin and causes nappy rash. Ways to prevent a reddened foreskin and diaper rash can include the following:

- changing diapers more frequently
- allowing diaper free times to allow air to circulate and help healing
- soaking in warm baths
- avoiding things that can irritate the skin (such as bubble baths, soap, highly chlorinated water, some laundry powders)
- encouraging your child to drink more so the pee is dilute (not too concentrated)

If the foreskin or penis is red, painful and swollen there may be an infection and you should see your doctor.

Phimosis

Phimosis is tightening of the foreskin so that it cannot be pulled back behind the glans of the penis. This is normal in infancy and early childhood. If it persists a course of steroid cream can help thin the skin and enable the foreskin to be pulled back.



