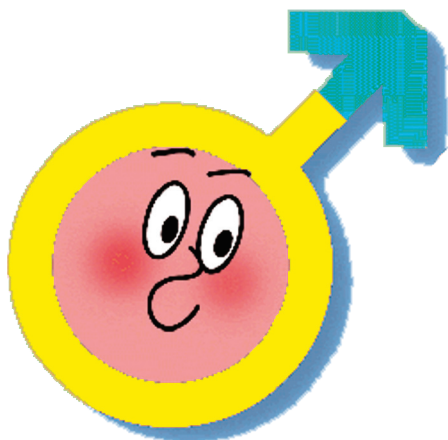


# Circumcision HelpDesk™



## **Circumcision Styles** *Function and Aesthetics*



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# Circumcision Styles: Function and Aesthetics

When performing a circumcision for a teen or adult is generally possible for the doctor to adjust three parameters, essentially independently, to achieve distinct aesthetic/visual differences. These adjustments are not so easily achieved when circumcising infants or young children as their penis is generally too small to be able to reliably make them. Similarly, the use of certain devices to assist in the circumcision can limit the ability to make adjustments.

The parameters that can be adjusted are: tightness, position of the cut, and retention or not of the frenulum. We will consider each of these in the following paragraphs, after looking at the composition of the foreskin.

## Foreskin Composition

It is not widely appreciated that the foreskin is composed of two layers, rather like the cuff of a shirt.

The outer layer is continuous with, and indistinguishable from, the skin on the shaft of the penis.

At the tip of the foreskin there is a ring of light muscle to keep it gently closed against ingress of dirt. This is normally very elastic and expands readily to allow the foreskin to pass freely over the glans rim on erection or manual retraction.

The foreskin folds inwards at this point and changes its nature from normal skin to mucous membrane, which is much thinner, significantly lighter in colour and more prone to trauma.

The inner foreskin continues to the rim of the glans where it turns forwards again and becomes the actual skin of the glans.

## Tightness

Tightness is controlled by how much total skin is removed and hence how much spare/loose skin there is afterwards. The loose extra skin may originate from the outer foreskin, inner foreskin, shaft skin or a combination of these.

Most adult men prefer their skin to be tight on erection so that no part of the glans can be re-covered during masturbation or intercourse. The reason for wanting this is that the glans, and especially its rim, is the sexually most sensitive part of the entire penis and the rim therefore needs to get maximum stimulation for greatest pleasure.

The possible disadvantage of a truly tight cut may be that some skin is pulled onto the penis from the abdomen and/or scrotum to compensate during strong erections.

A loose circumcision, on the other hand, can leave the glans partially covered when flaccid (or even when erect) with the continued production of smegma and its infection risk.

When describing a circumcision as 'tight' or 'loose' we consider only the situation at full erection. There may always be some looseness when flaccid, even from a 'tight' cut.

## Position

Position of the cut is often described as 'high' or 'low' although the cut may be placed anywhere between these to give, for example, a 'medium high' cut. We will consider the extremes and the effect of intermediate positions can be extrapolated from these.

A 'high' cut places the line of the cut as far away from the glans as practicable, thus retaining maximum inner mucous membrane and removing only outer skin and, possibly, shaft skin.

The advantages of this style are: 1) The fact of having been circumcised is immediately obvious with the two-tone look and the distinct colour change across the clearly defined line of the scar, and 2) Some additional sexual sensitivity might be retained in the inner mucous membrane, at least for a few years.

The disadvantages are: 1) The obvious scar line and two-tone look are not attractive to many, 2) The inner foreskin is retained with its easy ability to pass some STIs through, 3) There is more swelling from the mucous membrane during healing, and 4) The mucous membrane is liable to trauma during rough sex, including some forms of masturbation.

A 'low' cut places the line of the cut immediately behind the sulcus (the 'groove' behind the glans). The result is the removal of all of the former inner mucous membrane.

The advantages of this style are: 1) There is no 'two-tone' effect, 2) The circumcision scar is hidden behind the glans and not so obvious, 3) The swelling is less, as the most vulnerable skin has been removed, and 4) The risk of ever catching each of several STIs (including HIV/AIDS, Chlamydia and HPV) is reduced by up to 60%.

The potential disadvantage is that the mucous membrane is thought to be more sexually sensitive. This may be true for the first few years but over time it toughens to be more like normal skin and loses the excess sensitivity.

In the USA, the majority position seems to be 'high', whereas elsewhere (especially in the UK) it is more likely to be 'low' or intermediate.

## Frenulum

The frenulum is the 'cord' joining the back of the glans to the inner foreskin. Its sole purpose is to *assist* the foreskin to re-cover the glans as an erection subsides. Therefore, without a foreskin it is redundant. It is also not widely recognised that the majority of the sexually sensitive nerves there are not *in* the frenulum but *under* it and only stimulated *through* it. If the frenulum is removed they become closer to the surface and can usually be more directly stimulated, giving greater pleasure for most folk.

If retained, especially with a 'high' or 'tight' cut, the frenulum can: 1) distort the meatus (piss slit) - leading to spraying, 2) cause the glans to bend downwards on full erection - making erections uncomfortable and/or insertion for intercourse difficult.

## Conclusion

There is no ideal or best style as aesthetics are mainly, like beauty, 'in the eye of the beholder'. The most commonly requested styles are 'high and tight' or 'low and tight'.

Some doctors automatically include removal of the frenulum in a circumcision (unless specifically asked to keep it), whilst others, surprisingly, charge extra to remove it.

Ultimately, the choice is YOURS alone to make and convey to the surgeon as it is your penis and you who has to live with what you choose.