

Guidelines for male circumcision in the Victorian public hospital system

Information for health care professionals from the Department of Human Services

From 1 September 2007 Victorian public hospitals will be providing circumcision of males for medical reasons only.

What medical reasons are there for male circumcision?

Public hospitals will continue to provide circumcision where there is an identified need for surgery to improve the patient's physical health. The medical reasons for circumcision are as follows:

Phimosis A condition that prevents the retraction of the foreskin, which is either congenital or the result of infection.

Recurrent Balanoposthitis A generalised inflammation of the penis occurring as a complication of bacterial or fungal infection.

Paraphimosis A condition characterised by an inability to replace the foreskin in its normal position after it has been retracted, which is caused by a narrow or inflamed foreskin.

When can non-medical circumcision take place in a public hospital?

From 1 September 2007 non-medical circumcision will not be routinely available in a public hospital unless the patient:

- is already on an elective surgery waiting list
- has a referral which has been received by the hospital prior to 1 September 2007.

What is recommended best clinical practice for circumcision?

To reduce risks and discomfort for the child the Department of Human Services recommends that circumcision be performed:

- only in a hospital setting (registered hospital or day procedure centre)
- under a general anaesthetic
- by a suitably qualified medical practitioner
- when the child is more than 6 months of age.

What would you recommend I tell parents who enquire about circumcision?

Parents should be informed about the policy and recommended best clinical practice for circumcision as per the information above. They should also be provided with a copy of:

- *Male circumcision in Victorian public hospitals: Information for parents from the Department of Human Services*

Produced by the department, this information sheet explains the rationale behind the policy and provides alternative options. This sheet has been translated into Arabic, Turkish, Somali, Tigrinya, Amharic, Oromo, Albanian, Bosnian and Dari.

- *Circumcision: A parents' guide to routine circumcision of male infants and boys*

Produced by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, this brochure explains the possible risks and possible benefits of circumcision and may suit the information needs of parents who are considering circumcision for non-medical reasons.

These can be downloaded from:

www.health.vic.gov.au/electivesurgery

You or your patients can also request copies of these by calling Information Victoria on:

Telephone 1300 366 356

For more information parents can contact the Elective Surgery Access Line on 1300 781 821.

Prior to referring parents to this number, health services should make every effort to manage them in accordance with normal processes, such as referring them to a Patient Advocate.

Why has this policy been introduced?

The Advisory Committee on Access to Elective Surgery (ACAES), which advises the Department of Human Services, has determined that public hospital treatment should be prioritised to treat patients who have a clinical need for surgery to improve their health. As a consequence, ACAES has recommended that Victorian public hospitals:

- continue to provide circumcision for medical reasons (that is, where there is an identified need for surgery to improve the patient's physical health)
- no longer routinely provide circumcision for non-medical reasons, as there is no scientific evidence to support routine circumcision of neonates.¹

Non-medical circumcision is one of a range of surgical procedures that are no longer being routinely provided by Victorian public hospitals.

Non-medical circumcision is not provided by public hospitals in New South Wales and Tasmania.

¹ The Paediatrics and Child Health Division of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the American Academy of Paediatrics do not support routine neonatal circumcision.