

Male Genital Mutilation

Foreskin amputation is more often than not performed against the will or without the consent of the affected person and causes serious bodily, sexual, and psychological harm. It should therefore be called what it is: male genital mutilation (MGM).

It is comparable to some forms of female genital mutilation (FGM). To be sure, there are extremely destructive forms of FGM: for example pharaonic "circumcision" or infibulation, which entails the cutting and sewing together of the labia majora and/or labia minora and constitutes approximately 15% of FGM cases. Other forms are less invasive, though. In the widespread Sunnah variety, for example, the clitoral hood, which develops from the same embryonic tissue as the penile foreskin, is removed. In other cases, the clitoris is pricked or incised.

Children worldwide should be protected. Thus genital mutilations mustn't be condemned or sanctioned based on their degree of harm or the type and amount of amputated tissue. Instead, the violation of children's rights to self-determination and genital integrity must be universally proscribed.

Freedom of Religion

The principle of genital autonomy does not contradict religious freedom. It doesn't prohibit religious "circumcisions," but rather simply postpones them until adulthood so that the affected person can decide himself whether he wants to take this step in the name of his religion. Only thus can real religious freedom, which also includes freedom from religion, be established.

Change in religious communities is a lengthy process and its pioneers bring upon themselves intense social pressure to follow religious dictates and tradition. Nevertheless many Jewish parents are now renouncing the "circumcision" of their sons and are celebrating, instead of the traditional Brit Mila, a Brit Shalom, which forgoes surgical intervention and leaves the penis intact.

About intaktiv

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

This tenet of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights grounds the objectives and work of intaktiv e.V. – A Voice for Genital Autonomy. We champion the right of all people to decide for themselves whether any medically non-indicated surgeries will be performed on their genitals. We intend to achieve this goal first and foremost through social education.

We reject the "Beschneidungsgesetz" (§ 1631 d BGB) – the law passed by the German parliament on 12.12.2012 even though it violates the German Constitution and human dignity.

We are neither opposed to religions generally nor to religious people. On the contrary, we aspire to work with individuals who belong to cultures and religions that perform "circumcision" or other forms of genital mutilation and are already calling these practices into question within their communities.

intaktiv was founded in May 2013 and has been a registered charity since November 2013.



**- A Voice for
Genital Autonomy**

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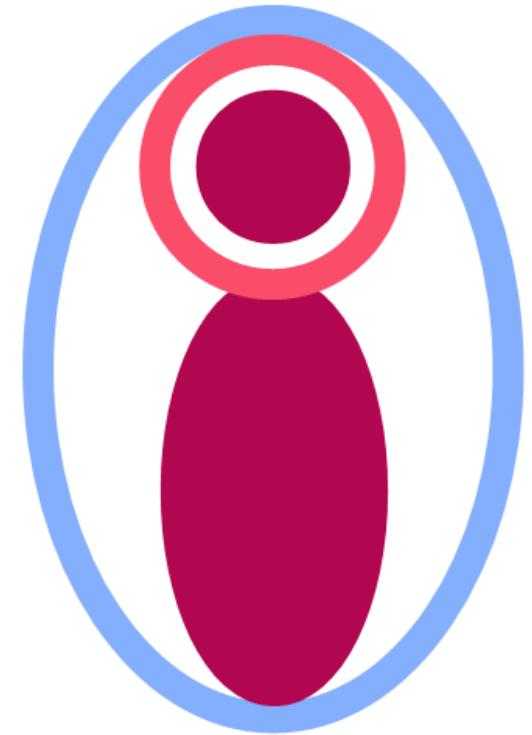
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intaktiv e.V.

**– A Voice for
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**"Circumcision"
of Boys**

Foreskin Amputation

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What does "circumcision" mean?

The so-called circumcision of boys is the partial or full removal of the foreskin (penile prepuce), which normally covers the glans penis (head of the penis).

In the case of very young boys, this is not a matter of simply cutting off the foreskin. At such an early age, the foreskin is not yet physically differentiated from the glans. So it has to be forcibly torn away from the glans before it can be separately amputated.

Reasons for Foreskin Amputation

Foreskin amputations are usually performed during childhood and rarely out of true medical necessity. Many operations take place for religious (Judaism, Islam) or cultural (Africa, Philippines) reasons.

In the USA and a few other English-speaking countries, "routine infant circumcision" is practiced, ostensibly in order to improve hygiene and prevent diseases such as HIV and cancer. However, it is not proven that foreskin amputation really provides protection from these diseases. Regular cleansing and safe sex are substantially more reliable as prophylactic measures and clearly less invasive.

In Germany, phimosis (tightness of the preputial orifice) is one of the most common reasons cited for performing foreskin amputations. However, an operation is usually not medically necessary; a tight, non-retractable foreskin is normal in children until the middle of puberty and requires no attention or treatment if it doesn't cause problems.

In the rare cases when phimosis is truly pathological (generally in adolescents and adults, not in young boys), ointments and careful stretching work in most cases. If these fail, there are surgical procedures that spare the foreskin (for example, triple incision). Similarly, other foreskin problems such as adhesions or inflammations can almost always be remedied without amputation.

Consequences of Foreskin Amputation

The foreskin is a double-layered cutaneous fold that consists of an inner mucous membrane and an outer layer of normal penis shaft skin. Unfolded, it measures 75 to 100 square cm (about the size of the pink rectangle) and constitutes about half of the penile skin.

With about 20,000 specialized nerve endings, the foreskin – and especially its tip – is the most sensitive part of the male body and contributes substantially to sexual sensitivity. Thus, its removal considerably diminishes both the variety and intensity of sexual sensation.

The foreskin also has important sexual functions. For example, an intact male is able to pleasure himself by manipulating the foreskin back and forth over the penile shaft, while "circumcised" boys and men often need lubricant in order to masturbate. The foreskin's gliding action and natural lubrication also reduce friction during intercourse.

Additionally, foreskin amputation leaves the glans unprotected. Due to friction, its surface gradually changes from a mucous membrane (like the inner foreskin) into a sort of callus. Thereby even more sexual sensitivity is lost over time.

Furthermore, the highly sensitive frenulum (the band of tissue that connects the prepuce and the glans) is often damaged and sometimes completely ablated during foreskin amputation.

All in all, only about a quarter of the original sensibility of the penis remains after a foreskin amputation. To be sure, men who were "circumcised" as children often claim that they don't feel affected, but that's because they simply have no comparison. Men who have undergone foreskin removal as adults perceive the difference as very drastic, and compare it, for example, with seeing in color versus seeing in black and white.

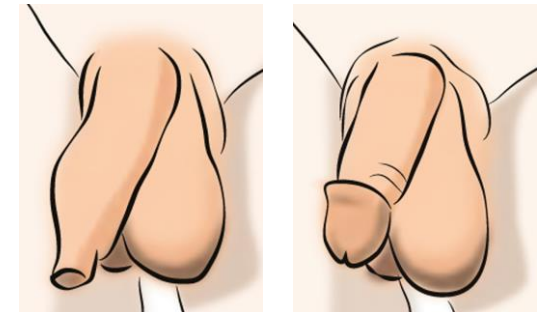


Pain and Trauma

Due to the high sensitivity of the foreskin, its amputation is a very painful operation. Older boys who undergo it in well-equipped medical settings are therefore usually put under general anesthesia, but the postoperative pain still causes significant suffering.

In the case of infant circumcision, anesthesia is a big problem: General anesthesia is not possible for newborns and all other methods are wholly inadequate. The extreme pain of the operation results in unconscious trauma.

But foreskin amputation is traumatizing for older boys as well. Besides the postoperative pain, they often do not understand the reason for this violation of their bodies, and feel betrayed by their parents, from whom they expect protection. Because of the radical change to the penis, many of them no longer feel like proper boys.



Intact and "circumcised" penis
(Source: Flyer "Mann, oh Mann" from BVKJ)

Risks of Foreskin Amputation

Like any other operation, amputation of the foreskin has risks. "Minor" problems include, for example, unaesthetic scarring or narrowing of the urethral orifice (meatal stenosis). As a result of serious surgical errors, the glans or the entire penis can be lost. Life threatening bleeding or infections are also possible. Even in modern hospitals, boys die time and again as a result of foreskin amputations.