

# Circumcision

## Care After Surgery

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### Instructions for caring for your child after their circumcision

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#### What is a circumcision?

This surgery removes the foreskin and uncovers the head of the penis.

#### When will my child be able to go home?

Most children go home the day of surgery. If your child has another medical condition, they may need to stay overnight.

#### Where can I watch videos that explain how to care for my child after surgery?

We created videos to explain how to care for your child after surgery. You can search for these titles on YouTube. You may need to login due to age restrictions.

- “How to Care for Your Child After Urologic Surgery”  
[youtube.com/watch?v=epLQn5D62wk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=epLQn5D62wk)



- “How to Care for Your Child After Penile Surgery”  
[youtube.com/watch?v=ppZeEKY848M](https://youtube.com/watch?v=ppZeEKY848M)



#### When may my child eat?



- We will start with a light diet.
- When your child is fully awake, they may have clear liquids like 7UP, Jell-O, Popsicles and apple juice.
- Nausea and throwing up (vomiting) are common after surgery. If this happens, give your child a small amount of clear liquids at a time.
- If your child is not sick to their stomach (nauseous) or throwing up (vomiting) and is fully awake, start their regular diet.

#### How do I care for the surgery site?



- After surgery, your child may have a bandage (dressing) on their penis. There will be an opening in the top that will allow your child to pee (urinate).
- If your child does not have a dressing, we may have used a PlastiBell ring or surgery glue.
- Starting the day of surgery, put petroleum jelly over your child’s surgical site. This keeps the penis protected while it is healing.

#### To Learn More

- Urology  
206-987-2509
- General Surgery  
206-987-2794
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](https://seattlechildrens.org)

#### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### Can my child take a bath, shower, swim or get wet?



- Give your child only sponge baths for the first 2 days. After that, they can take showers and quick baths - no longer than 10 minutes of soaking.
- Avoid long baths or swimming in pools, lakes or the ocean for 2 weeks.

### Tips for using petroleum jelly (Vaseline)

- Wash your hands first.
- Use a moderate to large amount each time.
- Do not use antibiotic ointment instead of the petroleum jelly.
- If your child is in diapers, apply it at every diaper change. If your child uses the toilet, apply it 3 to 4 times a day and as needed.
- Use the petroleum jelly for 2 weeks or until the area is completely healed.
- Put the petroleum jelly on with your clean finger or cotton swab.
- Apply the petroleum jelly around the PlastiBell ring if used or on the tip of the penis over the surgical dressing if used.
- Push back the area around the penis (suprapubic fat pad) if needed so that the petroleum jelly covers the entire surgical site.

### How do I care for the dressing (if used)?

Your child has 1 of 2 types of bandage (dressing)

- Clear dressing:** this will fall off on its own some time from 2 to 10 days after surgery. You do not need to remove this.
- White dressing:** remove this 2 days after surgery at home. The dressing helps to reduce the risk of bleeding and swelling.
- If the dressing becomes very dirty with poop (stool) that cannot be wiped off, remove the dressing right away so you can clean the incision. It is ok to rinse off poop even if it is less than 48 hours after surgery.
- If you removed the dirty dressing or it falls off early, do not replace it.

### To remove the white dressing:

1. Have your child sit in a warm bath for about 10 minutes. This helps loosen the dressing and makes it easier to remove.
2. If the bandage is not loosening, have your child sit in the bath for another 10 to 20 minutes.
3. If the dressing is still not coming off easily or seems to be stuck, apply 1 cup of oil (corn, vegetable, olive or baby oil) directly on the penis. Allow this to soak in for 20 minutes and then remove the dressing.
4. If the dressing is still not coming off, call the Urology clinic for more tips.

### How do I care for the PlastiBell ring (if used)?

If we used a PlastiBell ring, it should fall off after 5 days. If the ring falls off before 5 days, call us to schedule an appointment. If the ring does not fall off after 10 days, call us to schedule an appointment. No other special care is needed aside from putting on the petroleum jelly (see above).

### What can I expect during the healing process?

- The frenulum is a normal band at the bottom of the penis. It looks like a line running down the shaft of the penis.
- The area around the incision will be swollen and red. You may see a small amount of blood on the dressing or in the diaper the first day after surgery. You may also notice some bruising, yellow crusting or scabbing. This will get better but can take up to 2 months to heal.
- For more information and photos of what to expect after surgery, read our handout “Circumcision Photo Guide: What to Expect after Surgery.” [seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2937.pdf](http://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2937.pdf)
- Mild spotting of blood in the diaper or underwear the first days after surgery can be expected.
- If you notice that your child’s diaper or underwear is soaked with blood or you can see the surgery site actively dripping with blood, apply constant pressure to the area for 5 minutes to stop the bleeding. If the bleeding continues, call the Seattle Children’s Main Campus Emergency Room at 206.987.2222.

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### How much activity can my child do?

- Watch your child closely on the day of surgery.
- Follow the activity instructions below based on your child’s age.

#### If your child is younger than 2 years of age:



- Younger children will limit their own crawling, walking and activities.
- Car seats and stroller straps are safe. Use as instructed by the manufacturer.
- **Avoid any straddle activities with your child that would increase pressure between the legs for 2 weeks.**
- **Do not:**
  - Hold your child on your hip
  - Bounce your child on your knee
  - Use baby-wearing devices
  - Use bouncer toys that have a harness

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#### If your child is 2 years of age or older:



Avoid strenuous activities, rough-housing or activities that involve straddle-activity. A good rule of thumb is to keep both of your child’s feet on the ground for 2 weeks.

- Do not let your child do the following for 2 weeks after surgery:
  - Jungle-gyms/climbing
  - Gym class
  - Bicycle/tricycles
  - After-school sports

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### When can my child return to school?

- Your child may return to school when they no longer need opioid pain medicine or frequent daytime over-the-counter pain medications. Keep in mind the school nurse will need to be comfortable with putting the petroleum jelly on your child’s penis or your child will need to do it.

### Will my child have pain?

- After surgery, your child will likely feel pain on the penis. We partner with you and your child to relieve pain as completely as possible. No matter the level of your child's pain, believe they are hurting and respond right away.

### How do I manage my child's pain?



- Effective pain control will help your child feel better and heal faster. Start by giving your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) alternating every 3 hours with ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) for the first 2 days after surgery and then you will use it as needed. Check with the healthcare provider first before giving any type of medicine to your child.
- If your child's healthcare provider prescribed an opioid medicine for pain, use this if the acetaminophen or ibuprofen does not help relieve pain.
- Tylenol and prescription pain medicine may not be safe to use at the same time. Check with your healthcare provider or pharmacy.
- In addition to medicine for pain, you can also help your child cope by distracting them with music, games, books, TV or videos.
- For more information about pain, read our handout "Acute Pain". [seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE503.pdf](https://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE503.pdf)

### How do I dispose of unused medication?

To keep your family safe, store medicines inside a locked cabinet or location where others cannot easily get to them. Once your child has recovered from surgery, dispose of all unused prescription medicines. Taking leftover pain or other medicines on purpose or by accident, can be very dangerous. For more information about safe disposal of unused opioid medications, read our handout "Safe Use and Disposal of Opioid Medicines" [seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE3140.pdf](https://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE3140.pdf) or visit [takebackyourmeds.org](https://takebackyourmeds.org) to find a take back place near you.

### When should I call a doctor?



Monday to Friday, call the Urology Clinic at **206-987-2509** or General Surgery at **206-987-0237** for questions or any of the concerns listed below. Send MyChart messages for non-urgent questions.

Nights, weekends and holidays, call **206-987-2000** and ask the hospital operator for the urology or general surgery resident on call for urgent concerns from the following list:

- Fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
- Redness and swelling that spreads up into the stomach area
- Bleeding that cannot be stopped after you have applied pressure for 5 minutes
- Your child has pain that can't be controlled by the medicine prescribed
- Cannot pee for a span of 8 hours after surgery
- Vomiting 4 or more times in 12 hours