

Genesis Midwives Position Statement on Circumcision

It is important for parents to realize that, biologically speaking, there is not extra tissue on the human genitals. The foreskin and the clitoral hood are a functional part of the body, with important functions for protection, lubrication, and sexual functions. Historically, routine circumcision in North America has been performed to decrease sexual sensitivity and pleasure, or for religious reasons.

Male Infant circumcision is surgical removal of the foreskin, the tissue that protects the glans or head of the penis. It may be done for religious or cultural reasons, or because it is the parents preference that a baby boy's genitals look a certain way. **This is legal in Canada.**

Female infant circumcision is the surgical removal of the clitoral hood, and may include some deeper tissues as well. It may be done for religious or cultural reasons, or because it is the parents preference that a baby girl's genitals look a certain way. **This is not legal in Canada; and female children are protected by laws from having genital alterations without medical indication. Legally, it is considered abusive to perform unnecessary surgery on infant females.**

As male circumcision is not a medically recommended procedure, it is not covered by OHIP. There are doctors who will perform male infant circumcisions and you can contact your family doctor to find out how to arrange this.

As female circumcision is illegal, parents and practitioners who engage in this practice can be prosecuted.

We respectfully request that the timing of the circumcision be delayed until after the baby is feeding well and gaining weight and above birth weight. The pain and trauma involved in amputation of this sensitive tissue can cause a baby to feed poorly for a few days. A baby who is already having feeding and weight gain challenges may have additional challenges if circumcised at this time.

If you feel that you want to preserve your baby boy's right to choose whether or not to be circumcised, we respectfully suggest that this procedure be offered to him when he is old enough to give his own consent to the procedure.

Canadian infant girls have this right protected by Canadian law.

After 18 years of age, a person can choose how to alter their body.

We have deep concerns about the ethics that defend the right of any person to remove sensitive and functional body parts from another person for non-medical reasons, without the affected party's consent.