

PENIS AND FORESKIN CARE

Most problems with your son's foreskin can be managed by gentle day to day care – keeping the foreskin healthy can prevent redness, pain and infection.

The foreskin is the loose skin covering the end of the penis. A foreskin covers the head of the penis (glans) and cannot be easily pulled back in most newborns. Over time, the foreskin separates and is able to be moved back from the tip of the penis – this often happens due to a buildup of smegma under the foreskin. Smegma is a cheesy substance produced naturally under the foreskin which is nothing to worry about and **not** a sign in young boys of poor hygiene.

In many boys the foreskin will loosen by about 2 years of age, but in some it may not happen until puberty. This is normal.

In a small number of boys, the foreskin will never retract (be able to be pulled back over the head of the penis). This condition is called phimosis. **Your son's foreskin should never be forcibly pulled back for cleaning.** There is no need to clean inside the foreskin in young boys, and trying to force the foreskin down may cause scarring and problems in the future.

A circumcised penis is one where the foreskin has been removed by a surgical procedure.

DAILY CARE

Most young boys will frequently touch or play with their penis. This is a normal part of their development and how they learn about their body. Once the foreskin is ready to be retracted, your son will most probably discover this for himself.

- Your son's foreskin should never be forcibly pulled back for cleaning. There is no need to clean inside the foreskin in young boys
- Once the foreskin is easily retracted, your son should learn to do this as part of normal washing in the bath. Ensure he rinses off any soap and pulls the foreskin back to cover the head of the penis afterwards
- Wash the penis the same as any other part of your son's body and be careful to rinse off any soap
- Use non-perfumed soap
- Make sure you change wet or dirty nappies promptly
- Try leaving him without a nappy for short periods of time (fresh air is helpful), especially if he has nappy rash

- Soak in a warm bath to soothe red/ sore skin. Dry thoroughly afterwards
- Do not apply antiseptic creams or lotions to the penis or foreskin (unless prescribed by a doctor).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is my son's foreskin red at the tip?

Redness at the tip of the foreskin is very common and may be due to irritation from soiled wet nappies, soap residue, or from trying to pull the foreskin down to clean the penis. Avoiding these things, changing nappies frequently and applying some barrier or nappy cream to the tip of the penis can help.

What if my son has nappy rash?

Make sure you change wet or dirty nappies promptly. Try leaving him without a nappy for short periods of time (fresh air is helpful). A warm bath may soothe red/ sore skin. Dry thoroughly afterwards and apply a barrier or nappy rash cream liberally with each nappy change.

What is balanitis?

Sometimes the tip of the foreskin or the glans becomes red from an infection. If this is the case, a steroid cream or ointment may be prescribed by your doctor. Your son may cry or complain of pain in the penis, especially when passing urine (doing a wee). A warm bath may be helpful in soothing the sore/red skin surrounding the penis.

What happens if my son's foreskin becomes 'stuck' and cannot be pulled back over the head of the penis?

If the foreskin is retracted and becomes stuck seek urgent medical attention either at your GP or Hospital.

What is phimosis?

True phimosis occurs when the tip of the foreskin is very narrow. The foreskin cannot retract over the head of the penis. Treatment begins with a steroid cream to try to allow the opening in the skin to begin bigger. In severe cases, a circumcision is required.

When to see a doctor

- If the foreskin is retracted and becomes stuck seek urgent medical attention either at your GP or Hospital
- If the penis is red or swollen
- If your child appears distressed when passing urine
- If your child has a fever
- If there is a discharge or pus coming from the penis.

KEY POINTS

- Wash the penis the same as any other part of your son's body and be careful to rinse off any soap
- Make sure you change wet or dirty nappies promptly
- If the foreskin is retracted and becomes stuck seek urgent medical attention either at your GP or Hospital.

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