



The best time for circumcision?

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Dear Editor,

There are different ideas about the appropriate age of circumcision and unfortunately medical researchers have not agreed on the same idea yet. Circumcision is performed for various reasons in different communities including: cultural, religious, preventive and therapeutic. So, to answer this question some points should be considered. There are two facts in medical aspect. First is the treatment aspect of circumcision that most physicians have consensus opinions on it, such as the phimosis treatment which should be done as soon as possible. Second, the common medical indication including 2-10% of the circumcisions shows that the prevention of urinary tract infection is the major cause. Circumcision for medical indications is especially done in Europe, Central and South America and the Far East countries.

Urinary tract infection (UTI) incidence is 2.15% in uncircumcised children, 0.22% in circumcised children and 2% in girls in the

first year of life. Overall, UTI is 5-20 folds less in circumcised children especially in first year of life.¹ Simforoosh et al. studied on 6000 infants and reported that asymptomatic UTI exists in 2% of uncircumcised children, but this amount was zero in circumcised children.² Several studies suggest that circumcision should be done in neonates because it is performed with previous plan, minimum stress and elective situation and improves rapidly. Neonates have a thin prepuce that does not need to suture and it can be done with regional anesthesia. Also, the costs of performing circumcision in neonates are ten times less than older children.¹

Banieghbal defined that circumcision of a neonate less than one week of age has the lowest pain. The pain is maximized at 4 weeks of age. Hence, the first week of age is the best time for circumcision.³ The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that neonates should be operated with a

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minimum weight of 2250 grams and physiological jaundice is not a contraindication for operation. The incidence of neonatal circumcision's complications was reported as 0.2-0.6 % by the AAP in 1999, which is much less than urinary tract infection.⁴

For as much as the most common cause of circumcision is religion, it is better to explain the different religious ideas here. The first documents of circumcision were explained in Torah. The Jews have special emphasize on circumcision. In Torah, God said to Moses to give this order to the Bani Israil: If a woman gives birth to a son, on the eighth day, he must be circumcised. According to this law, nowadays many of the Jews circumcise their sons on the eighth day after birth.⁵

Islam recommends the circumcision on the seventh day after birth and it is considered as an action for child health.⁶ Although this emphasis is mentioned in Islamic sources, however, circumcision is actually done later in Islamic communities.

As mentioned above, if the goal of circumcisions is prevention, particularly the urinary tract infection, it is better to do it in neonatal stage. If circumcision is done for religious reasons, the best time is on the seventh or eighth day after birth (Islam and Jews). As a conclusion, the best time for circumcision is in neonatal age.

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