

# Penis and foreskin care

English

It is important to look after your child's penis and foreskin to keep it healthy and prevent redness, pain and infection.

The foreskin is the loose skin covering the head (glans) of the penis. The foreskin cannot be retracted (pulled back from the head of the penis) in most newborns, but over time the foreskin separates and is able to be retracted.

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 child will probably discover this for themselves.

Children who have been circumcised have had their foreskin removed by a surgical procedure.

## Foreskin separation

The foreskin will have separated in many one-year-olds, and 90 per cent of four-year-old boys will have a separated foreskin. However, for some children, the separation may not happen until puberty. This is normal. In a rare condition called phimosis, the foreskin will never retract.

As the penis and foreskin naturally separate, there is often redness or pain when passing urine (having a wee). This is normal and usually gets better after one to two days. While the separation occurs, small collections of white/yellow lumps (smegma) can accumulate. The smegma is normal and nothing to worry about.

## Care at home

- Do not forcibly retract your child's foreskin for cleaning. There is no need to clean inside the foreskin in young children. Trying to force the foreskin may cause scarring and problems in the future.
- Once the foreskin is easily retracted, your child should learn to do this as part of normal washing in the bath or shower. The penis should be washed the same way as any other part of the body. Ensure your child rinses off any soap and replaces the foreskin to cover the head of the penis afterwards.
- The foreskin should always be replaced to cover the head of the penis after your child has urinated.
- Do not apply antiseptic creams or lotions to the penis or foreskin (unless prescribed by a doctor).

Nappy rash can cause redness and pain in your child's penis. To prevent nappy rash, make sure you change wet or dirty nappies promptly.

- Try leaving your child without a nappy for short periods of time. Fresh air will help to prevent nappy rash, and will help nappy rash get better.
- Soaking in a warm bath helps to soothe red or sore skin. Dry thoroughly afterwards.
- Apply barrier or nappy-rash cream with each nappy change, including to the tip of the penis, and avoid using nappy wipes on the penis.

## When to see a doctor

Take your child to a doctor if:

- the penis is red and swollen
- your child appears distressed when passing urine
- your child has a fever along with other symptoms
- there is a discharge or pus coming from the penis
- your child's foreskin balloons when he passes urine.

**If the foreskin is retracted and becomes stuck, seek urgent medical attention from your doctor or hospital.** This is called paraphimosis and requires urgent medical review.

## Key points to remember

- Your child's foreskin should never be forcibly retracted for cleaning.
- Wash the penis the same as any other part of your child's body, and make sure you rinse off any soap. Teach your child to do this as part of their normal washing.

- Make sure you change wet or dirty nappies promptly.
- **If the foreskin is retracted and becomes stuck, seek urgent medical attention.**

## For more information

- See your doctor, Maternal and Child Health Nurse or paediatrician



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