Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin covering the head (glans) of the penis. It is a ritual of the Jewish and Islamic religions and one of the puberty ceremonies of some African and New Guinean cultures. It is commonly performed in North America, more in the United States than Canada, for non-religious reasons as a matter of parental choice.

The procedure is usually performed by the obstetrician or family practice physician though it may be done by the pediatrician or urologist. A surgical consent must be signed by the parents before the baby can be circumcised. Other information about circumcision:

1. The percentage of male infants circumcised in the U.S. today is about 60%.
2. There are no legal or few medical reasons for circumcising the male newborn, though it is more easily done during the newborn period.
3. The American Academy of Pediatrics has no recommendations on routine circumcision except that parents are well informed before making the decision.¹
4. If a newborn is ill, has a bleeding disorder or any malformation of the penis, such as hypospadias (the urethral opening is under the head of the penis rather than on the tip), a circumcision will not be done.
5. The procedure usually takes less than 15 minutes to complete and heals in about 7-10 days.
6. The infant will feel pain.
7. Local anesthesia is sometimes used; this reduces but does not eliminate all pain associated with circumcision. On occasion, local anesthesia doesn't work. Complications from anesthesia are rare and consist of systemic reactions, local tissue damage, bruising and temporary alterations in some reflexes.
8. Complications from circumcision occur about 0.5 to 2% of the time and include infection, bleeding, inflammation, pain of urination and scarring of urinary outlet. Serious complications are rare.
9. There is a fee which may be covered by insurance; DSHS does not cover the cost.
10. Some studies note an increased incidence of cancer of the penis in uncircumcised males.¹ This may be due to the combination of being uncircumcised and not adequately cleaning the penis. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a lifetime of commitment to good hygiene of the penis be made to reduce the potential risk of the penile cancer in uncircumcised males.¹
11. Some studies have found an association between urinary tract infections and not being circumcised. This may be avoided by careful cleaning of the penis.²
12. There is no evidence that circumcision prevents cancer of the prostate gland (though it may reduce the risk of some sexually transmitted diseases) or that circumcision or non-circumcision affects sexual performance.