

## Circumcision, a simple decision ... but complicated

I'm with Seinfeld's Elaine Benes who said, "I don't know how you guys walk around with those things!" Given my biological difference, most of the decision for circumcision for our sons defaulted to my husband who ultimately decided the men of the household would all look the same. Since he and our older son weren't going to be growing a foreskin, that necessitated removal of the new baby's foreskin.

Some families choose not to circumcise infant males, but my husband had made the culturally and religiously appropriate decision to circumcise our first born based also on what he considered to be the healthy way to go. It's a simple procedure that's been done for thousands of years, but lately there's been a lot of criticism about it from a new crop of parents, whom I would discover, can be downright judgmental about it. To make matters worse, we were living in Southeast Asia where it wasn't common to circumcise infants. The complications began to mount as I started looking into the options for getting it done.

I started doing my homework:

- Ask a Male Doctor - We talked to an American pediatrician back home who said that circumcision could be performed [up to 10 days after birth without anesthesia](#). After 10 days, the foreskin thickens, requiring that the infant receive general anesthesia. He also suggested checking to see if there was a Jewish community in our country of residence, because most Jews require the procedure for males.
- Ask a Female Doctor - We talked to a gynecologist in the country where we were living, and she assured me that while circumcision was not normally performed in their hospital that they could do it. Not very encouraging.
- Look for Synagogue - Unfortunately, we determined there was no substantial Jewish

community where we were living.

- Meet Pediatrician After Birth - No way, what a jerk!

So, we didn't circumcise. I considered trying to rush a medical passport to a neighboring country within the 10 days – that seemed totally irrational for a voluntary procedure. Then, several months passed while continuing my conversation with someone who could only be described as a "belligerent" pediatrician. I decided not to push the subject. Who would want an irritated physician performing this "simple procedure?"

But I still wanted the procedure for him. Finally, I learned that a pediatric surgeon was coming to our country who was experienced with good bedside manners. I scheduled an appointment since we were now well past the 10-day window. I knew the circumcision would require general anesthesia; nonetheless, he wouldn't be able to do it on his visit, and it would have required a special flight from France – all for a 30 second procedure.

I came to peace with the fact our family would be a little mismatched. But not before doing a little more research.

The competing camps were persuasive. One group circumcises for cultural and religious reasons, another group circumcises for medical reasons – including [lower risks of STD, penile cancer, and UTI](#), and one group abstains from infant circumcision to allow the male to choose for himself when he is old enough. Then there were the crazies – that group who makes judgements and is [militant against all male circumcision](#).

My husband, a lifetime due-paying member of the cultural and religious camp, did not share my peace with our mismatched family, so I extended my search for circumcision. We looked in neighboring countries and finally secured an appointment with a doctor who would perform an elective circumcision on our toddler. The surgeon even offered to file with the insurance that the circumcision was needed due to urinary problems – but I declined the offer. My guilt couldn't handle it.

The "simple procedure" [originally performed with a sharp stone](#) in the wilderness had morphed into a surgical procedure requiring cash payment for general anesthesia and medical services performed by one of the leading pediatric surgeons in Southeast Asia. We were happy it was a state-of-the-art facility, but it was quite a job!

I'm confident that this is not what the Almighty had in mind when He instituted circumcision. After our 2-year long, multi-national experience I'm left a little perplexed. So, where do I stand on circumcision? Somewhere between mandated and mutilated – but always in favor of families living out their values and passing on their values to their children.