

# The Case Against Circumcision

Why do we still engage in the ritual, nonconsensual genital mutilation of newborn boys?

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Nature does exquisite work. Behold: the foreskin.

Not mine, which was cut off on my eighth day of life outside the womb, and probably not yours, because the circumcision rate in the U. S. is estimated to be 70 percent, ranking way up there among Tanzania and Chad and the Republic of the Congo and Burundi, places where older boys are cut at puberty as a manhood ritual.

Here, year after year, more than a million healthy baby boys get cut right after birth for no religious or therapeutic reasons at all. These newborns aren't ill; their reproductive equipment is intact. *All* of it. That isn't the problem. Circumcision's the problem.

In Greenland and Iceland, the circumcision rate is 0.1 percent. Portugal's is 0.61 percent, Italy's 2.6 percent. Sweden's is 5.1 percent, Japan's a whopping 9 percent. Scores of nations with their own health-care systems, doctors, and researchers with access to the same medical data worldwide almost never cut off a kid's foreskin for no medical reason whatsoever.

The foreskin comes fused to the head of the penis—and hey, if reading or thinking about this makes you queasy, good. Even better if you recoil from the idea of genital surgery performed upon healthy boys to cut off a piece of skin that's literally a part of their dick. The foreskin must be peeled off, the adhesions broken, the membrane itself tugged up and clamped before amputation.

In America in 2025, this is done to newborn boys with nerve-block shots, sucrose lollipops, and the trusty Gomco clamp, invented in 1935. Is it safe? Hell yes. The only thing safer is no circumcision.

Genital cutting, no matter what you call it or how it's done, is a remnant of prehistorical humanity predating by at least ten thousand years Abraham and the tribe called Jews, who actually absorbed the custom from Egypt, then pasted it into Genesis as the story of God commanding Abraham to murder his son as an act of sacrifice and obedience. Abraham's willingness to cut Isaac inspired the Lord to settle for the kid's prepuce in exchange for an eternal covenant.

On those terms rests the true theological measure of the foreskin's value. It is priceless. And the act of cutting off the foreskin is a blood sacrifice, Gomco clamp and all.

What does it mean that no other animal on earth does such a thing to its own genitalia? And not because other species care about cruelty, much less consent. They don't do it because it's batshit crazy to disfigure yourself and others of your kind. Nature does foreskins for biological reasons, not to swap for a nod from a god.

What does it mean that Egyptian artworks from thousands and thousands of years ago feature circumcised dicks? Mummies, too. Historians think it was a sign of elite status, royal or religious, in the Upper Paleolithic era, and from there back the historical trail vanishes; no one's sure exactly where or when circumcision became established first in the Near East and Africa. Historical and anthropological speculation suggests that it arose in more than one region, both as a mark of full manhood and to punish prisoners of war and slaves; castration tended to kill off the supply.

What all this means at the macro level is that the dick—every dick, all dicks—is packed with *mojo and juju*, central to manhood.

A foreskin isn't a mystery. Cutting it off, for any reason, is the mystery. Debates about American circumcision exist, along with a scattered "intactivist" movement, but the terms of the debate are absurd. Even calling it a debate presumes a human intelligence greater than nature's own. Nature rests its case and wins every time a boy is born.

If you are a male of the species, your dick was born wearing a hoodie. Why?

Because nature wants it there, O my brothers, and nature will *not* cease production. Firstly and finally, nature is not *in* the reproduction business—nature *is* the reproduction business, and we are animals.

And we are born to . . . hang. Our so-called "vital" organs—the brain, heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys—are all inside, where they belong, to keep us alive. Marvels of evolution, one and all. The brain? Forget about that master organ ever yielding up the depths of its impenetrable mysteries. What *doesn't* it do up there, running every episode and season of the whole show? Sheesh.

And down there squats young Captain Johnson, the part-timer helming the organ system entrusted with keeping *all* of us alive—wary, waiting, eye closed yet unsleeping. His one job is the occasional delivery of two separate products, one at a time.



getty images

The Bloodstained Men and Their Friends, a protest group against the circumcision of babies, on day three of a two-week protest across Pennsylvania in 2021.

One of those two products is liquid waste, and Johnson delivers it with little fuss. The other one is liquid gold, the nectar that preserves the species. It's a very special job whenever that stuff ships. Wowza! Scheduled or not, there's hoopla galore, and there are times when Johnson finds himself in the wind and the wild, delivering the goods. And nature made sure he had a hat on when he left.

It's that simple. Why you emerged from the womb with a foreskin is no mystery, hermanos. A foreskin is no mistake that Mother Nature keeps making; it's a fundamental part of your reproductive equipment. It's not vestigial, not optional, not a tear-off wrapper for the package that ultimately matters most to Her.

Why a foreskin?

Because Mother Nature, like an online avatar, wants you to come. She wants you to come quick, hard, and often. She knows what you want, *stud*, and what you want means more of precisely what nature needs in order to ensure human survival. More orgasms equal more life.

A foreskin's there to serve and protect the king, to keep his meaty head—the glans—moist, pink, and softly and exquisitely sensitive to fine-touch pressure. It retracts with erection and then it rolls up and down and up and down over and over and over your dick's sweet spot—you *know* what I'm talking about—until you climax and release the goods.

Simple and brilliant. Nature had no leeway in placing the phallic site, so she contrived a membranous cap of two-way tissue, like an eyelid, to guard the glans at different stages of its growth and usage—and to make your orgasm unforgettable for at least twenty minutes.

If you truly wish to know nature's genius, though, ponder the orgasm itself. In the moment we are most animal, we feel like godlings, body and mind and spirit and soul one being, thrilled to the quick, in spasms of cosmic joy.



**A foreskin is your best friend's best friend—a *wingman*, a *guardian*, an *angel*. Nature did not fuck it up.**

That's quality work. Pure art, form and function wed to timeless design, with continuous proof of concept spanning eons. A foreskin is your best friend's best friend—a wingman, a guardian, an angel.

Nature did not fuck it up.

America fucked up the foreskin. We need to cool off a minute to remind ourselves that the genital cutting of young girls is forbidden by law in 41 states.

Why?

To protect children from unnecessary harm, physical and emotional.

Ah, but circumcision? Nontherapeutic neonatal genital surgery on your child? Having a well-trained medical doctor cut his foreskin off in a jiff seeing as how you're both just lying there anyhow?

That's your call. Yours alone. I'm entirely serious. Maybe your ob-gyn or pediatrician has a personal opinion, but the default authority is the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has issued policy statements regarding circumcision periodically for more than fifty years but seems to have shrugged and left the table after its legendary 2012 bank shot:

*Although health benefits are not great enough to recommend routine circumcision for all male newborns, the benefits of circumcision are sufficient to justify access to this procedure for families choosing it and to warrant third-party payment for circumcision of male newborns.*

Fking hell. Atlas had it easy compared with the real-world numbers crushing *routine* in that sentence.

The global circumcision rate is 30 percent, the vast majority by Muslims.

One more time: America's circumcision rate is 70 percent.

It's highest among Caucasian men, for what that's worth. And don't blame Jews or Muslims, who total 3.5 percent, tops, of the U. S. population and whose ritual circumcisions are generally unreported. The nontherapeutic neonatal genital cutting of newborn boys—circumcision—is still done more than a million times a year, “in accordance with established procedure,” the dictionary's definition of *routine*.

All those other countries, the ones that don't routinely cut babies, aren't suffering waves of penile and cervical cancers, STDs, HIV, infant urinary-tract infections—and, strangely, their populace doesn't own 1.2 firearms per citizen. These are happy places where most folks enjoy good, relatively cheap health care and live longer lives.

Truth is, the only places on the planet where the circumcision rates exceed ours are harsher, much poorer nations and those officially ruled by various gods and customs that demand as tribute a literal blood sacrifice, either to seal a covenant or to prove one's fitness for manhood. For the most part, these are countries that also practice one form or another of female ritual genital mutilation.

In America, where circumcision was exceedingly rare until the late nineteenth century, you can blame doctors in general; the embrace of germ theory and safer, more sanitary surgeries; and Paul Remondino, a prominent surgeon, whose book *The History of Circumcision from the Earliest Times to the Present* sold fifty thousand copies in its first printing in 1891 and costs two dollars on Kindle.

Not to go full Gopnik on you—never go full Gopnik—but here's a dollop of Remondino's prose stylings in regard to foreskins:

The prepuce seems to exercise a malign influence in the most distant and apparently unconnected manner; where, like some of the evil genii or sprites in the Arabian tales, it can reach from afar the object of its malignity . . . making him a victim to all manner of ills, sufferings and tribulations; unfitting him for marriage or the cares of business; making him miserable and an object of continual scolding and punishment in childhood, through its worriments and nocturnal enuresis; later on, beginning to affect him with all kinds of physical distortions and ailments, nocturnal pollutions, and other conditions calculated to weaken him physically, mentally, and morally; to land him, perchance, in jail or even in a lunatic asylum.

Remondino was not a quack; he'd worked as a medical cadet and later as an assistant surgeon for the Union in the Civil War, then served as the first president of San Diego's Board of Health. According to *The Journal of*

*Urology*, he “was considered to have almost singlehandedly popularized circumcision in the United States at a time when the intact foreskin was the norm and circumcision was an aberration.”

By the time his book came out, doctors were already cutting male and female patients’ genitalia to “cure” many ailments, including epilepsy, tuberculosis, and gout, but Remondino’s true foe was the DIY orgasm and its dire effects upon every man’s physical fitness and moral goodness—all packed, *Strangelove*-style, in the purity of his essence, and all thanks to the rush of joy and liberation that came every time in its wake, followed by depletion, physical and moral. A man’s very soul hung over that ring of fire between his legs, roasting, seared to char, spilling itself empty on its plunge to hell.

This was America when Walt Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass” was banned in Boston and he was fired from his job for celebrating orgasms too hard. In Victorian America, hygiene was the new frontier, the American Medical Association ascended to its throne, and the foreskin turned to filth in every way, simultaneously demonized and trivialized, medical waste, trash.

Ethics? *Bioethics*? P. C. Remondino was spilling over with ethics, and a child’s right to bodily integrity was beside the point. It was war between good and evil—and it was unwinnable. Lose the orgasm and there is no baby in the bathwater. Cut back on the profligacy of waste and sin by cutting off the foreskin? Yessir. Absolutely. To do a little passing harm to a newborn creature who does not yet feel pain—American doctors believed that and didn’t use pain meds routinely for the procedure until the 1980s—what the heck, it was just a quick snip to mitigate the greater harm, a graver abuse, a personal and social harm, a sinful and damning practice. Rub some dirt on it, kid.

Dr. R was an American version of his pro-cutting colleagues, dating back a thousand years and more. In the 1100s, a Sephardic rabbi and physician—Moses ben Maimon, aka Maimonides, aka the Rambam, a revered sage of blessed memory—revealed the deal as he saw it:

**The bodily pain caused to that member is the real purpose of circumcision. None of the activities necessary for the preservation of the individual is harmed thereby, nor is procreation rendered impossible, but violent concupiscence and lust that goes beyond what is needed are diminished. The fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable. For if at birth this member has been made to bleed and has had its covering taken away from it, it must indubitably be weakened.**

The Rambam was interpreting his own tribe’s god’s meaning and intention, the Yahweh who was willing to wipe his whole slate clean of humankind for its disobedience, who demanded Isaac’s murder before settling for his cutting.

Maimonides saw that the injury inflicted by circumcision was a painful loss to the individual, not some surgical cure in search of moral and physical disease. It is a literal sacrifice, a choice to suffer, to ache, to lose a piece of one’s flesh in order to deny one’s own pleasure by pleasing the god who created the human body.

Power and control, submission and obedience, the lifelong struggle between man’s human and animal natures—all resolved with ten commandments and a ten-minute genital amputation.

Put your faith in any god you like and believe that it’s your right to have done to your newborn son’s penis whatever you think your god wishes done to it to prove that you and your child are duly worshipful. God’s choice, not yours; you are your god’s servant, as is your son, including his foreskin.



But bear in mind that this is why all tribal gods insist that a son be circumcised young, before he gains the power to decide for himself if his dick needs cutting; giving him the power to choose or reject circumcision would eventually end the practice.



The medical benefits of circumcision? The undisputed medical benefits of neonatal genital cutting?

1. The risk of urinary-tract infection in the first year of life is 1 percent for uncircumcised boys and 0.1 percent for circumcised boys.
2. Circumcision prevents penile cancer, a vanishingly rare cancer that generally befalls elderly men.

That's it. Everything else about the medical risks and benefits of neonatal nontherapeutic genital cutting has been disputed for eons and remains the subject of thousands of published papers citing hundreds of competing, contradictory studies. It makes it easier to forget that circumcision is a zero-sum and lifelong outcome.

In a rational universe, including the worlds of medicine and science, a proposal to introduce circumcision as a new health practice would be dismissed as quackery or worse.

You don't have to buy Sigmund Freud's views of the human psyche to get what he meant by "castration anxiety," and you need no proof of newborn memory acquisition to infer that a creature removed from its mother's breast days after its birth and taken away from her for genital surgery is going to suffer shock and pain as its introduction to life outside the womb.

Also, you don't need a microscope to talk about ethics. The AAP opposes all forms of female genital cutting for any reason. Ethics, Leo. *Bioethics*.

*Feh*. Ethics are arguable by definition, and the ethics of circumcision have been debated for millennia and continue to produce reams of research papers and policy statements, and uh-oh—someone swiped Captain Johnson's helmet and there's a war for human survival going on and we're talking about *ethics*. Poor Johnson's doomed either way—like every last one of us—but he wants what nature needs as often and as much as possible before he drops dead. *Ethics*?

Is it ethical to perform surgery on a person because they are a newborn boy and could get a urinary-tract infection or venereal disease or go crazy from pulling his pud?

Fuck. No. Not ethical. Not even legal.

Unless his parents sign a consent form, in which case, cool. The parents are presumed to be acting in the best interest of the child, and the most common reasons by far that irreligious Americans circumcise their sons are those fabulous medical benefits—and their wish for their son's pee-pee to conform to his father's and peers' pee-pees.

I understand. My folks had it done to me because we were Jews; I had it done to our son for the same reason. I hired a mohel, a ritual foreskin cutter and a holy man to cut *and* pray to God to accept my boy's flesh and blood as a token of our fealty, gratitude, obedience, and love, all in exchange for I do not know what for sure.

That was stupid of me.

That's not to say that I do not savor and give thanks for the miracles of life, of being in the world, as pure blessings, beginning with the beginning of us all, the big bang and the mighty orgasm. I should've skipped the bris, though, and let us take our chances. My wife went along with it, had to force herself not to swoop him up and run out the back door when the mohel arrived. Instead, she bought a big refrigerator magnet that said, I [heart] MY PENIS, a brilliant decision that made me feel better every time I saw it, at least a little.

I'm not sure how our son feels about his penis; the subject never comes up, and we haven't seen each other's privates for many years. I've apologized to him for his cutting, and he told me to forget it.

Hell, I don't know how I feel about my own penis. We've had good times and bad, and I've never wished I had my foreskin back or anything like that. I just wish that I'd been kinder to it, and to myself, back when I worried that it wasn't big or thick or long or hard enough to make me a real man's man.

Men don't talk about their dicks unless they're talking shit, and I haven't done any studies, but I do know that porn, ED pills, and guns are vast market segments here, school shootings and various public massacres mark the calendar like squashed vermin, firing squads are the new electric chair, and Yeats's rough beast is the new orange. None of this stuff is evidence that men are anything but miserable pricks projecting their impotence and rage because they feel so small and weak and vulnerable.

If you can help your son love his penis and himself and by doing so increase his capacity to love by 0.001 percent, you'll be doing him and the world a solid. His foreskin comes attached for all the right reasons. Let it be.