

# Quotes from a 'vintage' 1986 brochure by the American Academy of Pediatrics

**SUMMARY:** Care of the uncircumcised penis is quite easy. "Leave it alone" is good advice...Do not retract the foreskin in an infant as it is almost always attached to the glans. Forcing the foreskin back may harm the penis, causing pain, bleeding, and possibly adhesions.

**SUMMARY:** Care of the uncircumcised boy is quite easy. "Leave it alone" is good advice. External washing and rinsing on a daily basis is all that is required. Do not retract the foreskin in an infant, as it is almost always attached to the glans, causing pain, bleeding, and possibly adhesions. The natural separation of the foreskin from the glans may take many years. After puberty, the adult male learns to retract the foreskin and cleanse under it on a daily basis.

## Newborns

Care of the Uncircumcised Penis

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 29,000 pediatricians dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children and adolescents in North, Central and South America.

**FORESKIN HYGIENE:** The foreskin is easy to care for... *It is not necessary to retract any part of the skin in order to wash under it.* The uncircumcised penis is easy to keep clean. No special care is required! Leave the penis alone. The body provides its own protection of the glans area because the foreskin is fused to it. There is no need for Q-tips, irrigation or antiseptics; soap and water externally will suffice."

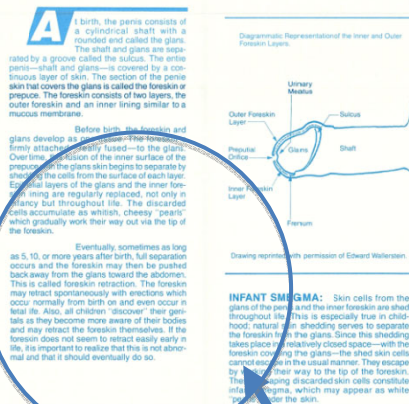
**ADULT SMEGMA:** Specialized sebaceous glands—Tyson's Glands—which are located on the glans under the foreskin, are largely inactive in childhood. At puberty, Tyson's Glands produce an oily substance, which, when mixed with skin cells, constitute adult smegma. Adult smegma serves as a protective lubrication to keep the glans.

**FORESKIN HYGIENE:** The foreskin is easy to care for. The infant should be bathed or soaped frequently, and all parts should be washed including the genitals. The uncircumcised penis is easy to keep clean. No special care is required. No attempt should be made to forcibly retract the foreskin. No manipulation is necessary. There is no need for special cleansing with Q-tips, irrigation or antiseptics; soap and water externally will suffice.

**FORESKIN RETRACTION:** As noted, the foreskin and glans develop as one tissue. Separation may occur before birth; this is normal. It may take a few days, weeks, months or even years. This is normal. Although many foreskins retract by age 5, there is no need for concern even if it takes a longer period. Some boys do not attain full foreskin retraction until adolescence.

**HYGIENE OF THE FULLY RETRACTED FORESKIN:** For the first few years, an occasional retraction with cleansing beneath is sufficient. Penis hygiene will later become a part of a child's total body hygiene, including hair shampooing, cleansing the folds of the ear and brushing teeth. At puberty, the male should be taught the importance of retracting the foreskin and cleaning beneath during his daily bath.

American Academy of Pediatrics



**This is good advice that is regularly ignored by many clinicians:**

"Before birth, the foreskin and glans develop as one tissue. The foreskin is firmly attached - really fused - to the glans. Over time, this fusion of the inner surface of the prepuce with the glans skin begins to separate by shedding the cells from the surface of each layer. Epithelial layers of the glans are regularly replaced, not only in infancy but throughout life. The discarded cells accumulate as whitish, cheesy "pearls" which gradually work their way out via the tip of the foreskin.

Eventually, sometimes as long as 5 or even 10 years after birth, full separation occurs and the foreskin may then be pushed back away from the glans toward the abdomen. This is called foreskin retraction. The foreskin may retract spontaneously with erections which occur normally from birth on and even in fetal life. Also all children "discover" their genitals as they become more aware of the bodies and may retract the foreskin themselves.

If the foreskin does not seem to retract easily early in life, it is important to realize this is not abnormal and it will eventually do so."

## Note:

In the first version of this brochure in 1984, the AAP misspelled uncircumcised as "uncircumsized" until Marilyn Milos of NOCIRC corrected the AAP and it was revised the same year. Curiously, both versions included the following content that was omitted from the 1986 and all future versions:

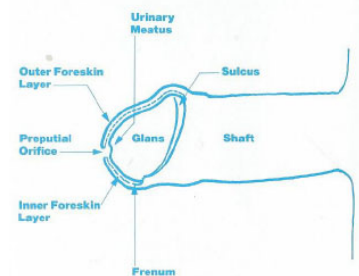
1) a diagram of the penis credits author Edward Wallerstein and his 1980 book "Circumcision: An American Health Fallacy." The diagram and credit to Wallerstein remained in future brochure versions but omitted the book title.

2) an important paragraph about Foreskin Functions was omitted.

3) Both of these features are omitted from the 1995 and 1999 versions of the AAP's 'Circumcision Pros & Cons' brochure, as well as its 2017 'Circumcision Information for Parents' brochure.

Original analysis by John Geisheker. Additional commentary by Tim Hammond, 2020

Diagrammatic Representation of the Inner and Outer Foreskin Layers.



Drawing reprinted with permission of Edward Wallerstein, author of Circumcision: An American Health Fallacy.

**The Function of the Foreskin:** The glans at birth is delicate and easily irritated by urine and feces. The foreskin shields the glans; with circumcision, this protection is lost. In such cases, the glans and especially the urinary opening (meatus) may become irritated or infected, causing ulcers, meatitis (inflammation of the meatus), and meatal stenosis (a narrowing of the urinary opening). Such problems virtually never occur in uncircumcised penises. The foreskin protects the glans throughout life.