



Frequently Asked Questions on

SAFE MALE CIRCUMCISION

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS SAFE MALE CIRCUMCISION?

ANSWER: Safe male circumcision is the surgical removal of the fore skin covering the end of the male so that the glans (or knob) is permanently exposed.

QUESTION 2: IS SAFE MALE CIRCUMCISION A COMMON PROCEDURE?

ANSWER: Male circumcision is one of the oldest and commonest surgical procedures in the world. It is done for different purposes i.e culture, social and medical reasons in different countries. In Botswana safe male circumcision was common as part of the Bogwera ceremony until the colonial rulers stopped the practice in the early 20th Century.

QUESTION 3: WHY ARE CHANCES OF HIV INFECTION LOWER IN A CIRCUMCISED MALE?

ANSWER: The inner part of the foreskin contains more cells that are more likely to be infected by HIV than the rest of the penis. These are the cells with a receptor that allows HIV to enter the body, like a lock with a key. When an uncircumcised man has sex, the receptor cells are exposed, thus putting him at risk of HIV infection if his female partner is positive. By removing the foreskin you reduce the number of these cells on the penis and lower the risk of a man acquiring HIV during sexual intercourse.

QUESTION 4: IS IT SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN THAT MALE CIRCUMCISION CAN PREVENT HIV INFECTION?

ANSWER: Medical research has shown that male circumcision offers partial protection against HIV infection. In a given act of unprotected sex with an HIV Positive woman, a circumcised man has a 60% lower risk of getting infected than an uncircumcised man. However, he can still get HIV so it is still essential that he avoids multiple partners and casual sex and that he uses condoms.

QUESTION 5: ARE THERE ANY OTHER BENEFITS OF MALE CIRCUMCISION?

ANSWER: Yes, there are many health benefits to male circumcision. Circumcised men have lower risks of getting sexually transmitted infections, urinary track infections, penile cancer and they find it easier to maintain penile hygiene. Removing the foreskin also prevents inflammation of the glans and avoids health problems such as inability to retract the foreskin due to swelling.

QUESTION 6: ARE THERE ANY RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MALE CIRCUMCISION?

ANSWER: As long as male circumcision is carried out by a qualified doctor in a sterile health facility, the risks are extremely low.

1. Waiting to resume sexual activity

Abstaining from sexual activity while the wound heals. One has to wait for at least 6 weeks to heal after surgery. Having sex before the wound is fully healed increases the risk of contracting HIV if one is negative or to transmit HIV to a partner if one is positive.

2. Positive oneself and a partner from HIV

Circumcision is not a complete protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. If one is negative, circumcision can help to reduce the risk of HIV infection but one can still get infected if having unprotected sex.

QUESTION 7: WHAT IMPACT DOES SMC HAVE ON THE CLIENT'S SEXUAL LIFE?

There is no scientific evidence that SMC either increases or decreases sexual pleasure for either partner. Clients who may experience challenges in their sexual life after circumcision should seek assistance from the health facilities. Depending on the nature of the problem the client will be referred to appropriate specialist intervention.

QUESTION 8: WHAT SHOULD A CLIENT DO BEFORE THE PROCEDURE?

The client goes through the following steps;

- HIV counseling and testing. The client can visit the nearest Voluntary Counseling and Testing centre in their area or the local clinic.

The VCT services are available at Tebelopele VCTC, Botswana Christian AIDS intervention Programme (BOCAIP) centres, Botswana Family Welfare Association (BOFWA) centres and other community based organizations

- SMC counseling before the procedure.
- Physical assessment to rule out any illness and contraindications
- The procedure itself and
- Post circumcision supportive counseling which will be done at each and every visit.

QUESTION 9: WHO CAN BE CIRCUMCISED?

ANSWER: All HIV negative men aged 0 – 49 years seeking circumcision can be circumcised. Circumcision is not promoted for HIV positive men as there are no proven benefits to them or their partners. If an HIV positive man insists on being, circumcision will be done after through counseling and provision of other necessary support.

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