

What Do the Experts Say About Forced Retraction?

“As a boy becomes more aware of his body, he will most likely discover how to retract his own foreskin. But foreskin retraction should never be forced. Until the foreskin fully separates, do not try to pull it back. Forcing the foreskin to retract before it is ready can cause severe pain, bleeding and tears in the skin.” **(The American Academy of Pediatrics)**

“At birth, the inner foreskin is usually fused to the glans. This prevents it from being pulled back or retracted to uncover the glans... The foreskin should never be retracted forcefully.” **(The Canadian Urological Association)**

“At birth... The foreskin is fused to the glans (head) by a normal connective membrane... The two are functionally an undifferentiated single structure... Typically [forced retraction] occurs when a poorly-trained physician or nurse tells the parent that the child has ‘adhesions’ (an unnatural tissue connection) which must be separated ‘for hygiene.’ ... it is incorrect to teach mothers to retract the foreskin.” **(Psychology Today)**

Summary of Intact Care

- Never push a child’s foreskin back to “clean” under it. This is called forced retraction
- The foreskin is fused to the head of the penis, sometimes until puberty
- The only person who should EVER retract the boy’s foreskin is THE BOY HIMSELF
- Forced retraction is very painful and can cause bleeding, infection and other complications

For links to all original sources referenced in this brochure or for more in depth information, visit www.YourWholeBaby.org/For-Healthcare-Providers.

Thank you for taking the time to educate yourself on proper intact care!



Your Whole Baby™
YourWholeBaby.org

Forced Retraction by Medical Professionals

An American Epidemic



Forced retraction (pushing back the foreskin of a child to **any** degree) at the hands of, or at the advice of, medical professionals, is an epidemic in America. Psychology Today estimates that there are more than 100,000 cases of forced retraction annually, with many of these instances happening at baby well checks. Forced retraction can be painful and can lead to complications that may need surgery to correct. As the number of intact males continues to grow in the United States, it is important for all healthcare providers to educate themselves on proper intact care and hygiene.

When Does Natural Retraction Occur?

There are a range of responses from health organizations, but they all equate to a similar message: In some males, foreskin may retract naturally a few years after birth, but in others not until a boy's late teens. Thus, healthcare providers should assume all male patients are non-retractable unless the male (or his guardian) can tell you with certainty that his foreskin is retractable.

"Most boys will be able to retract their foreskins by the time they are 5 years old, yet others will not be able to until the teen years." **(AAP)**

"It takes many years for this membrane to naturally dissipate, a few cells at a time. The average age for full foreskin retraction without trauma is ten years, with half of all boys at age ten fully retractable, and half not yet so."

(Psychology Today)

"The age at which the foreskin becomes completely retractable is quite variable. By three years, most boys can retract their foreskin at least partially. Only 1-2% of boys are still not able to retract their foreskin by the age of seventeen."

(Canadian Urological Association)

"...no one but the child messes with his foreskin... Their foreskin will separate with their own tugging and manipulation..." **(Dr. Adrienne Carmack, Board-Certified Urological Surgeon and Author)**

Consequences of Forced Retraction

"... I have had to do circumcisions on young boys because of scarring and infections that developed as a result of either doctors forcibly retracting their foreskins or parents doing it on doctor's advice." **(Dr. Adrienne Carmack, Board-Certified Urological Surgeon and Author)**

"Forced retraction also may lead to cracking and bleeding of the foreskin tip. Over time, this may cause scarring of the tip making retraction impossible." **(Canadian Urological Association)**

"The trauma of tearing the glans and foreskin apart before they separate naturally will cause intense pain, bleeding, swelling and expose what was formerly a sterile, internal site to infection. The trauma and subsequent infection may create scarring all the way around the foreskin that will make it inelastic and thus difficult to retract in

later life, when adult hygiene will actually be needed." **(Psychology Today)**

How to Clean an Intact Penis – "If intact, don't retract! Only clean what is seen!"

"Soap irritates mucosal tissue and dries it out... Don't wash your baby's foreskin with soap... just rinse the outside of the penis gently, from body to tip, as you would wash a finger," explains Dr. Adrienne Carmack in her book, *The Good Mommy's Guide to Her little Boy's Penis*.

The Canadian Urological Association explains, "The uncircumcised penis requires no special care... It is important not to retract the foreskin forcefully for any reason. Some parents feel the need to pull the foreskin back to 'clean under it.' Since the young boy's inner foreskin and the glans are initially fused, there is no space to clean."

Doctors Opposing Circumcision explains that boys and girls, "... needs only warm water gently applied to the outer, visible portions of his or her genitalia... No intrusive or interior cleaning of the genitalia... is ever needed or desirable, and aggressive hygiene is destructive of developing tissue and natural flora, and is harmful as well as painful."