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Infant Circumcision

By Rexanne Mancini

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If circumcision were a choice I had to have made, I would have run frantically from the hospital with my newborn son to protect him from the procedure. His father would have chased me down, insisting his son "look like he did." All I can say is I'm terribly relieved I didn't have to live through that. Nor did I have to make the agonizing choice of protecting my baby from pain or disrespecting my husband. It would have been a huge battle of conscience. I was spared and given daughters.

The decision to circumcise an infant boy or not is, in the USA and I'm assuming, most of the world, still a parent's sole responsibility. More and more doctors and pediatricians are recommending against routine circumcision. The controversy is beginning to reach epidemic proportions and will soon be a major issue facing new parents. I feel very sorry for those parents. They will be bombarded with opinions at every turn and surely go through hell with it, unless they have settled this issue between them before the baby's birth. Hopefully, they will agree. The problem I foresee is the parents not agreeing on circumcision, creating a stressful situation where there should be only joy.

Cultural tradition and religious practices notwithstanding, there is no longer a medical or rational reason to circumcise a child other than for purely "cosmetic" reasons. Circumcision is a very painful procedure, performed on a completely innocent and unsuspecting baby. This procedure rattles me to the point that I have refused to attend the Bris of more than one friend's baby son. (A Bris is a Jewish ceremony whereby a Rabbi circumcises an infant boy ... with a lot of witnesses.) Please understand, I have absolutely nothing against the Jewish faith. I have nothing against any faith, even if I do not agree with their beliefs or practices. I DO, however, have something against anyone who inflicts pain on an innocent child. This would include some cultures that also routinely circumcise adolescent girls. If we agree that this is a barbaric ceremony, can we then apply some of that sensibility to infant boys? Sure, male circumcision does not alter a boy sexually but it does cause considerable pain to our babies without any apparent benefit to the child. The issue of cleanliness is no longer a factor. In modern society, frequent bathing is as common as brushing one's hair.

Routine circumcision is obviously not malicious intent to senselessly cause pain to an infant, however, there is much information available today, most of which supports the case against circumcising. Not at

Infant Circumcision

least questioning this practice is burying one's head in the sand no matter how the parents choose to proceed.

Consider the recent poll numbers obtained by American Baby magazine on circumcision:

57% chose to circumcise

42% chose not to

2% were undecided

20% said it was a hard decision to make.

Granted, as life decisions go, circumcision is not one of the most enormous in relation to the impact it will have on our babies. I believe it is more an issue of questioning generally accepted practices that no

longer serve logical purposes. As neonatal circumcision is still performed on the majority of boys, (at least in the United States), this controversy should continue for a number of years. It will be interesting to see how our culture progresses and what the poll numbers will be like ten years from now.

Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters. She maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site, Rexanne.com - <http://www.rexanne.com> –Visit her site for good advice, award–winning Internet holiday pages and some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly dose of Rexanne: <http://www.rexanne.com/rwr–archives.html>

The Benefits Of Infant Massage

By Anne Morris

Most mothers instinctively lovingly massage their babies. Perhaps it was by understanding this and observing the effect upon the infant that the idea of infant massage was born. Actually infant massage has been in practice for many years. But recently its popularity has taken off worldwide. It should really come as no surprise since both babies and parents enjoy the benefits. Let's take a look at some of the benefits of infant massage below:

Infant Massage Facilitates Bonding

Touch between mother and baby is extremely important during the early months in order to develop the bond that will help the baby thrive and grow into a happy well adjusted child. The mother and father are able to provide gentle nurturing touches which the baby associates with love and being cared for. Infant massage helps the baby and parents get to know one another and spend quiet quality time together, communicating through touch.

Infant Massage Relaxes the Infant

A newborn baby's life is pretty stressful when you think about it. He gets hungry and cold and the only

Infant Circumcision

way he can let anyone know he needs attention is to yell for it. Infant massage can help relax a stressed out baby that has just had too much activity or is suffering from stomach upsets. When infant massage is part of the baby's normal routine, there is a good chance he will grow into a child who knows what relaxation is and how to achieve it to escape the stresses of life.

Infant Massage Improves Baby's Sleep

It follows that a baby lulled into relaxation by an infant massage will quickly succumb to slumber. The upside is that infant massage may help to promote sounder and longer sleep periods. Parents will also benefit from a soundly sleeping baby which will give them much needed rest also.

Infant Massage Supports Communication

Infant massage opens up a new channel for communication among baby and parents. Parents will learn to pick up on nonverbal cues from the baby. The infant will grow to feel as if he is being heard and attended to without having to clamor for it.

Infant Massage Relieves Discomfort

Studies indicate that infant massage releases endorphins and oxytocin into the baby's body. These elements may act to relieve the common discomforts a baby struggles with such as teething, stress, congestion, and colic. Watch any mother trying to comfort an unhappy baby as massage, rubbing, and patting just come naturally. The movements help to settle the child, relax him, and alleviate his discomfort.

Infant Massage is Fun

What better reason could there be for infant massage other than the simple fact that the baby and parents think it is fun? It is a great way to get some giggles and coos from the baby and have an enjoyable time together.

So given the above benefits, it is no wonder that infant massage is so popular. Of course mothers have been massaging their babies since the beginning of time, but when we speak of the formal infant massage you should know there is actually a method to follow. Certain types of movements act to calm and relax the baby before bedtime and other types of movements will energize him. Still other types of massage movements act to relieve discomfort. So if you would like to learn formal massage for your baby and experience the benefits above, ask around and see if you can find a local infant massage class that you and your baby can attend together.

Anne Morris is an established freelance writer. You can find more of her writings at

<http://www.baby-today.com>

and

<http://www.message-wire.com>



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