

# Circumcision to fight AIDS is debated

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Delegates to the 16th International AIDS Conference meeting in Toronto are debating whether to endorse circumcision as a method to fight AIDS.

Although a decision is not expected until at least two more studies are completed, a randomized controlled trial in South Africa was stopped early last year when it found a 60 percent lower risk of HIV infection in the men who had undergone the procedure, The Washington Post reported.

Such an endorsement would be controversial and complex; use of the procedure would require convincing cultures that do not practice circumcision of its benefits, while at the same time warning men not to count on it to protect them. It would also require drawing a clear distinction between that procedure and the misleadingly named "female circumcision," a form of ritual mutilation with no medical benefit, the Post said.

Two more randomized studies of circumcision are underway in Kenya and Uganda, with results expected in 2007 and 2008.

Circumcision is mostly practiced by Jews, Muslims, Americans of all religions, South Koreans, Filipinos, some African tribes and some peoples of the South Pacific, the newspaper said.

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