

# Parents want info about circumcision, not directives from health-care providers

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Most parents expect healthcare providers to answer their questions about circumcision, but they don't want a specific recommendation on the procedure, according to a new University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

More than half of [male infants](#) born in the United States are circumcised, but the rates of circumcision continue to decline.

"Both pro- and anti-circumcision advocates feel strongly about their views, which can create anxiety for new or expectant [parents](#) who are trying to find objective information on which to base a [decision](#). In this situation, healthcare providers can be an important source of help," says Sarah J. Clark, M.P.H. , associate director of the National Poll on Children's Health and associate research scientist in the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics.

"But our poll shows that parents don't want or expect a directive from their healthcare provider, but want them in a consultant role, providing information so they can make up their own minds."

Over 40% of parents in this poll said the provider should not recommend a specific decision about circumcision, and 75% said that once a decision is made, providers should accept it without argument. So for providers, this sets up a different sort of relationship with patients, Clark says, in which the patient is looking to them as sounding board rather than a decision maker.

Parents do expect providers to give information about circumcision. In the poll, 87% would like to get information before the baby is born, and 81% feel their baby's [healthcare provider](#) would be the best source. However, few parents meet with the pediatrician during the prenatal period.

"This is a missed opportunity for parents to hear from a trusted source at a critical time in their decision-making about circumcision. Many parents don't know that they can schedule a prenatal visit with their child's pediatrician to talk over issues just like these," says Clark, who is also a member of the U-M Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation. Parents ranked healthcare providers as the best source of information, well ahead of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, or parenting books. Only 5 percent of parents rated internet searches as a trustworthy source of information about circumcision and only 9 percent felt that they could tell the difference between true and false information on the internet.

"Welcoming a new baby is an exciting but also an anxious time. According to this [poll](#), healthcare providers can best help their patients by being an unbiased source of information about [circumcision](#) rather than pushing a particular decision," Clark says.

**More information:** Full report: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health: [mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/c ... -not-directives-docs](https://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/c...-not-directives-docs)

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