

THE CIRCUMCISION DECISION

Most men who are reading this will already have had the decision of whether or not to be circumcised made for them. Though it's one of the more personal decisions men can make about their body, it's not a decision that's usually left up to them. Until very recently, most baby boys were automatically circumcised shortly after birth; most parents never questioned the procedure. If they did ask questions, parents were usually counseled that circumcision is necessary for cleanliness and to cut back on the possibility of infection, and that it's what "everyone" does, and who wants their boy to look different from the other boys in the locker room?

Thankfully, many brave parents have stood up to custom and have decided not to circumcise their sons. It is estimated that almost half of baby boys are now leaving the hospital with their foreskins intact. Furthermore, while the rate of foreskin infection is slightly higher in uncircumcised boys than in circumcised ones (14 percent as compared to 8 percent), the advantages of having an intact foreskin outnumber the slight risk of infection — infection, by the way, that is easy to prevent through proper cleaning and easy to treat with natural remedies.

What are the advantages of keeping your foreskin intact, rather than having it sliced off at a young age? The foreskin was designed to protect and sheath the head of the penis. The foreskin is lined with sensitive nerve endings that enhance sexual pleasure, and it protects the head of the penis, keeping it moist with special lubricating oils that begin being produced during

puberty. These "oils" or secretions are much like vaginal secretions; they help prevent the head of the penis from drying out and help with lubrication during sex. And an intact foreskin can be fun for you and your partner to play with and can increase sexual sensitivity and pleasure — which may be exactly why religious leaders decided long ago that foreskins weren't necessary and needed to go.

Whether or not you decide to circumcise your son is entirely up to you; just be sure that you make an informed decision rather than have the hospital staff decide for you. Remember that the United States is one of the few countries in the world where it's still considered "normal" to be circumcised for nonreligious reasons. In fact, a whopping 80 percent of males outside the United States are uncircumcised.

While circumcision is still commonly practiced for religious reasons, even some religious groups are practicing forms of more sensitive and less violent circumcision. It's quite interesting that we publically denounce female circumcision and think of it as a barbaric practice. Is the time coming when we will look back and wonder why we allowed our infant sons to be circumcised? If music and kind words and loving thoughts can profoundly influence the development of our babies in womb, as has been proven extensively through neonatal studies, do we actually think that the early traumatic experience of circumcision has no influence on the development of our sons? There is a growing movement among men to leave their foreskins intact; above all, circumcision should be a personal decision.

Headache

Headaches are considered one of the most common nervous system disorders in the United States, with more than half a billion dollars spent yearly on headache medication. Headaches can result from a number of different problems, including low blood sugar, constipation, toxicity of the blood, allergies, insomnia or lack of sleep, eye stress, mental stress, and emotional tension. In rare cases headaches can signal deeper problems, such as brain tumors, but most often headaches are the body's complaint against the overtaxed, overstressed body, mind, and spirit.

Though there are hundreds of drugs promising instant headache cures, the cause of the headache has to be corrected before the problem can be solved. Allopathic medications — that is, pharmaceutical drugs — can be a quick fix and are recommended when the pain is severe. But often, once the pain is suppressed, the deeper issues are ignored and the headache returns, sometimes with a vengeance.

In rare cases, headaches can signal deeper distresses. Don't ignore the signals; if headaches get worse, not better, seek medical care.

Headaches basically fall into three categories: vascular headaches, which are caused by dilation of the blood vessels in the head; tension headaches, which are caused by constriction or tension of the muscles in the scalp, neck, and head; and migraines, which are caused by either of the above and are generally more severe, longer lasting, and more challenging to treat. All

three types of headaches are further agitated by stress, fatigue, and exhaustion.

Vascular Headaches

Vascular headaches are generally the result of an overly acidic condition of the body and too much cold food. Cold foods (ice cream, cold liquids), alcohol, and sweets can agitate this type of headache.

To counteract a vascular headache, quickly alkalize the body with salty, contractive foods (see the examples on page 89) and alkalizing tea (see page 90). Vascular headaches generally respond to treatment within 30 to 60 minutes.

RECURRING HEADACHES

Recurring headaches can indicate deeper issues that need addressing. Look first at lifestyle. Allergies are often the cause for recurring headaches. Are you eating foods that might trigger a chemical reaction in your system? Do you have allergies to pollen, mold, grass, or other substances? Poor digestion, constipation, or intestinal infection can cause headaches. Do you eat a healthy diet? Is your digestive system in good shape? Do you have regular bowel movements? If a headache persists or if you have recurring headaches and aren't able to source what might be causing it, consult with a holistic health practitioner, herbalist, or medical doctor.

Tension Headaches

Tension headaches are usually the result of stress, tension, mental strain, heat, dehydration, low blood sugar, or salty foods. The next time you get a headache, try to identify the foods you ate or the activity you engaged in prior to the onset of symptoms. This will help you determine the best treatment.

Tension headaches may take longer than vascular headaches to respond to treatment, sometimes up to 24 hours. Remedies consist of balancing the contractive condition of the body with cooling, sweet or sour liquids and foods. These include apple juice with lemon (¾ part apple juice with ¼ part freshly squeezed lemon juice), unsweetened cranberry juice, apple-sauce with lemon juice, and room-temperature nervine teas such as chamomile, passionflower, skullcap, and lemon balm served with freshly squeezed lemon.

Changing your activity is one of the most effective home treatments for tension headaches. If a headache comes on after you've been driving for several hours, sitting at a desk, or any other sedentary activity, switch to something more active. Take a brisk walk, jog, or find some other form of vigorous physical activity.

CONNECTING WITH NATURE DURING STRESS

“We need the tonic of the wilderness,” said Henry David Thoreau. The ocean, the mountains, the deserts, a wooded grove — the Earth Mother in all of her infinite compassion and strength has remarkable powers to restore vitality. Wash yourself in the pure water of the streams, put your bare feet on the good earth, fall asleep in the arms of an ancient tree. There is good medicine to be found in nature. It is long lasting and heals the soul.

Treatments for Vascular and Tension Headaches

The following suggestions are effective, safe treatments for both vascular and tension headaches.

FOOTBATHS Hot herbal footbaths are wonderful remedies for headaches. See page 57 to find a recipe you like. While soaking your feet in the hot herbal water, place a cold ice pack on your forehead or the nape of your neck. Also drink a warm nervine tea such as St. John's wort or one of the blends on pages 91 and 92. This treatment is enhanced if a friend rubs your shoulders for you while your feet are soaking.

VALERIAN Valerian tincture — ¼ teaspoon diluted in warm chamomile tea or water — can be taken every 30 minutes until the headache is gone. (Please note: While valerian is sedative for most people, in rare cases it causes irritation and agitation rather than relaxation.)

NIACINAMIDE Niacinamide, one of the B-complex vitamins, can be effective for some people suffering from headaches. Take 100 mg three times daily at the onset of symptoms.

ALKALIZING FOODS

SALTED PLUMS & MISO SOUP

If a vascular headache is caused by a rich diet, too much sugar, or a highly charged emotional state rather than stress factors, try eating Japanese salted plums, called umeboshi (available in natural foods stores and Asian groceries), or a cup of miso soup. This will alkalize the blood quickly.



BITTERS

If you have Swedish bitters or, better yet, Urban Moonshine bitters on hand, try a few drops (diluted in a bit of water if you like); they alkalize the system and neutralize excess acid in the digestive tract.

LEMON WATER with salt

It's not the most pleasant drink, but a glass of warm water with a freshly squeezed lemon and ¼ teaspoon of salt will help alkalize the system.



BRINED CURED OLIVES

Salty olives may also do the trick, if nothing else is available.



ALKALIZING HERB BLEND

This blend is helpful for reversing the acidic condition of the body that often leads to vascular headaches.



DANDELION ROOT



BURDOCK ROOT



YELLOW DOCK ROOT

- 3 parts dandelion root
- 2 parts burdock root
- 1 part yellow dock root
- Skullcap or valerian tincture (optional)

DECOCT the roots as instructed on page 12. Drink $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the tea every 30 minutes until symptoms subside. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon skullcap tincture or valerian tincture to each cup of tea for best effect.

There is a dignity inherent in the ability to tend to one's own condition, to live a knowing relationship with natural surroundings, possessing a personal independence with the skills to provide oneself with natural remedies and self-help — a dignity that I think is particularly fitting to the male nature and the male psyche.

— James Green

NERVINE HEADACHE FORMULA #1

A nervine formula can be helpful for both vascular and tension headaches. This is a favorite formula for headaches and has proven helpful for many people.



FEVERFEW



CALIFORNIA POPPY



LAVENDER

- 2 parts feverfew
- 1 part California poppy (leaf, flower, and seed)
- 1 part lavender

AS A TEA: Prepare as an infusion, following the instructions on page 12. Drink $\frac{1}{4}$ cup every half hour until the headache subsides.

AS A TINCTURE: Tinctures take 3 to 4 weeks to prepare, so make this ahead of time if you're prone to headaches, following the instructions on page 16. Take $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon, diluted in a small amount of warm water, every 30 to 45 minutes until the headache subsides.

NERVINE HEADACHE FORMULA #2

This second nervine formula is perhaps a little milder than formula #1, but it is particularly helpful for people who are overtired and mentally stressed.



CHAMOMILE



LEMON BALM



PASSIONFLOWER



SKULLCAP

- 3 parts chamomile
- 3 parts lemon balm
- 1 part passionflower
- 1 part skullcap

PREPARE as an infusion, following the instructions on page 12. Drink ½ cup every hour until the headache subsides.

Migraine Headaches

Migraines are similar to tension headaches in that they are contractive in nature and caused by similar imbalances, but they are more severe and are often recurring. They are also more difficult to treat, in part because it is seldom easy to identify what causes a migraine in the first place. Migraines have been linked to genetic factors but more often are the result of allergies or sensitivities to any number of substances, nutritional deficiencies, tension, hormones, immune suppression, smoke, mold, or a combination of all these factors.

Migraines are a signal from the body to the brain that it has reached a limit; trying to figure out what that limit is, is often only half the problem. The other is finding a remedy that is effective. Everyone seems to respond differently to different treatments for migraines, and it often takes dedication to find a remedy that works.

Though there are several classifications of migraines, the symptoms and causes are similar and the treatment is much the same. Many of the drugs available for migraines have harmful side effects, and though they offer temporary relief, they don't cure the condition. Migraines are generally corrected only after a long and serious commitment to alter the lifestyle patterns that may contribute to the problem — which is easy enough to say and do when you're feeling well, but very difficult to remain committed to when you're in dire stress from a migraine. Incorporating many of the suggestions listed for tension headaches (see page 88) will be helpful, along with the following treatments.

B VITAMINS PLUS RUTIN At the onset of migraine symptoms, begin taking niacinamide (300 mg daily), vitamin B6 (200 mg daily), and rutin (200 mg daily). Don't take the recommended amount all at once; divide it into three or four dosages and take them over the course of the day.

ALAGER EMERGEN-C This vitamin C blend can be very effective in helping to prevent migraines when taken at the onset of the symptoms. Take two packages (2,000 mg) of Emergen-C twice a day. I've added ½ teaspoon of guarana to the Emergen-C for even better results (though guarana contains caffeine and can be overstimulating for some people).

CAFFEINE Some types of migraines respond remarkably well to a strong dose of coffee, guarana, or other caffeine-rich herbs. In tension headaches, the veins contract and pressure builds in the head; caffeine quickly dilates the capillaries, initiating a sudden burst of blood through the veins. I have seen this powerful remedy work several times. If it doesn't work, however, you end up not only with a migraine, but also unable to sleep.

FEVERFEW Feverfew is the herbal medicine with the greatest success rate for migraine sufferers. It is not a "quick fix"; it is most effective as a preventive, and it generally must be used over an extended period of time to be effective. The herb is better used fresh than dried. Many people report good results using the tincture or tea, as well as eating one or two fresh leaves daily. (Just note that feverfew is contraindicated for pregnant women, as it can stimulate blood flow to the pelvis — not an issue for men, obviously.)

FEVERFEW-LAVENDER MIGRAINE FORMULA

This formula combines a classic nervine blend with St. John's wort, a nerve tonic, that can help with the stress and low spirits that can accompany chronic migraines.



FEVERFEW

CALIFORNIA POPPY

LAVENDER

ST. JOHN'S WORT

- 2 parts feverfew
- 1 part California poppy seed (and aerial parts of the plant)
- 1 part lavender
- 1 part St. John's wort

AS A TEA: Prepare as an infusion, following the instructions on page 12. Drink $\frac{1}{4}$ cup every half hour until the migraine subsides.

AS A TINCTURE: Tinctures take 3 to 4 weeks to prepare, so make this ahead of time if you're prone to migraines, following the instructions on page 16. As a migraine preventive, take $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon, diluted in a small amount of warm water, three times daily. To treat a migraine, take $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon, diluted in a bit of warm water, every hour until the headache subsides.

Matters of the Heart

The heart, our faithful, ever-pumping, throbbing center of emotions and feelings, remains the number one cause of mortality in men today. We know this is, in part, due to the “heart unfriendly” world we’ve created and live in today. Dietary patterns established over the past few decades have turned out to directly contribute to heart disease and are considered one of the primary reasons for the enormous amount of heart problems men experience today. Men also have become far more sedentary than they were even 50 years ago; all studies point to lack of exercise and a sedentary

lifestyle as a major cause of heart disease. Love, touch, bonding, intimacy — these feelings so enormously important to the human heart are often completely lacking even in the home environment of many men. Sadly, many men don't even recognize this deficit as an issue. And let's not even get started on stress . . . financial stressors, workplace pressures, fast-paced schedules, environmental triggers, and the enormous changes taking place on this planet are accumulating at accelerating rates. That's a lot of weight on any man's heart, even if he's completely unaware of its toll.

In order to stop breaking our male hearts, we will have to start breaking some male rules.

— James Green

HEART STATISTICS

The bad news is . . .

- Over 40 million people in the United States suffer from a diagnosed cardiovascular disease; an even larger number may have one but don't know it.
- Over 60 million people suffer from high blood pressure.
- Over 80 million have elevated cholesterol levels.

- Over 1.5 million have heart attacks every year.
- Heart disease is responsible for over half of the deaths each year in the United States.

THE GOOD NEWS IS . . . heart disease is one of the most preventable of chronic degenerative diseases. We can reverse these figures with a change of diet, more exercise, herbal therapy, and lifestyle changes. Love more and love more often. We have the power to do this by the choices we make.