



## Deinfibulation

You have been given this leaflet to help you to make a decision as to whether you wish to have the procedure to 'open' your circumcision (a technique called deinfibulation). This leaflet will help you to understand what happens during this procedure and how you may feel afterwards.

The practice of circumcision is usually extremely painful and distressing, damages sexually sensitive skin and is an on-going infection risk. The closing over of the vagina and the urethra (where urine comes from) leaves women with a very small opening in which to pass urine and menstrual fluid. The opening is so small that it needs to be opened to be able to have sexual intercourse or to give birth so that complications which could harm both mother and baby do not occur.

It may be important for you to talk through your feelings before you decide to have this done. You may not want your family to know you are considering this and the specialist midwife will understand and respect your need for confidentiality.

### What is deinfibulation?

Deinfibulation is the surgical procedure to open up the vaginal opening if your circumcision has involved narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal.

The seal is formed by cutting and sewing over the outer labia, with or without removal of the clitoris and inner labia. This form of circumcision is sometimes called Type 3 or Pharonic Circumcision.

The aim of deinfibulation is to restore normal anatomy as far as possible. It involves opening the scar tissue (the covering seal) until the vaginal opening and urethra can clearly be seen. The procedure is the same whether it is carried out as a procedure before pregnancy, during pregnancy, or in labour itself.

### When is deinfibulation performed?

Deinfibulation can be performed before marriage, before you try to be close with your partner so that the first time that you have intercourse it will be easier, or in the antenatal period ideally around 24 weeks gestation to allow time for healing before the birth.

This avoids the need to cut the scar tissue in labour and reduces the possibility of tears that can occur when the baby's head stretches the scarred area and perineum.

Deinfibulation can also be carried out in the first part of labour if you prefer.

### How is the procedure performed?

You can choose to be awake and have the procedure performed under a local anaesthetic within the unit or to have a general anaesthetic (where you are put into a sleep state) which will involve going to theatre for a short period of time.

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The area is made numb using a local anaesthetic and the procedure takes between 20 and 30 minutes. The scar tissue is opened and the skin is then stitched either side of the scar to keep it from healing together again.

You will usually heal very quickly and the stitches will dissolve, so you do not need to have them removed.

Afterwards you will stay on the ward for 30-60 minutes, or until you feel ok to go home. It is a good idea to have someone to stay with you and to take you home afterwards.

## **Caring for yourself after the procedure**

Drink plenty of water after the procedure to help dilute your urine and reduce stinging sensation to the area. You can also pour some warm water over the area as you pass urine for the first few times which may ease any discomfort.

It is important to keep the area clean to help it heal. If you are uncomfortable after the procedure, you can take paracetamol as directed on the packet.

You will be able to pass urine much more quickly and more noisily and that can sometimes be a surprise. You have been used to your body being this way for a long time and once the reversal is done you may need to get used to it being different.

Your monthly period or the first bleed that you have after having a baby may also seem much heavier to you compared to before, once the procedure has been done.

Your body will look different but most women soon get used to this as their symptoms improve quickly.

Your specialist midwife will arrange a follow up appointment to see you 3-4 weeks after the procedure.

## **Useful telephone numbers:**

Specialist Midwife: 07817 534 274, Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm.

## **Accessibility**

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