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It Takes a Lot of Dick-Tugging to Get Your Foreskin Back

July 1, 2015

by Peter Holslin



(whatsapp://send?text=http://www.vice.com/read/it-takes-a-lot-of-dick-tugging-to-get-your-foreskin-back-701)



Tug, tug, tug. Photo by Flickr user [toffehoff](https://www.flickr.com/photos/toffehoff/) (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/toffehoff/>)

Every morning, Ray James follows a similar routine. He rises before dawn. He fixes himself breakfast. He

checks his email. And then, for five to 15 minutes, he straps a device onto his penis to stretch out his foreskin.

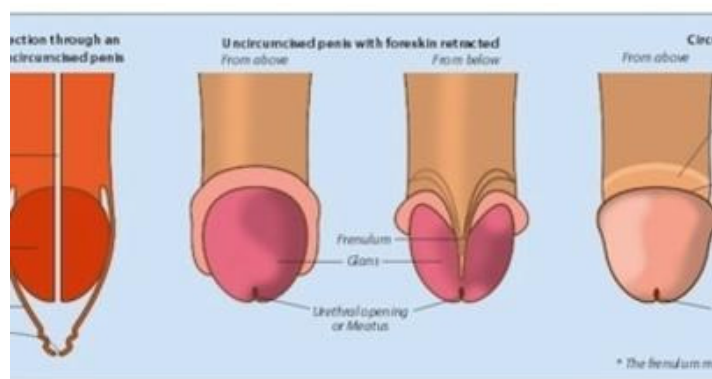
Forty-year-old James, who works in construction and lives near the city of Lafayette, Louisiana, has been partaking in this odd ritual since 2009. He's used a variety of devices—some he bought online, others he fashioned himself out of hacksawed tuba mouthpieces, jury-rigged ear cleansing bulbs, and stainless steel pipe fittings—with which he's been able to "restore" his foreskin, reversing what he describes as damage done by a doctor who circumcised him as a newborn.

"I'm about 80 percent of the way finished, and it's taken me six years to get this far," James told me, sending over a series of dick pics via email to offer proof of his progress.

Plenty of men consider a **circumcised penis** (<https://www.vice.com/tag/circumcision>) to be natural, befitting of ancient religious customs and routine medical practices. But James is among a large movement of guys who believe that cutting off one's foreskin is a cruel and pointless practice. Though medical experts don't always agree, they argue that circumcision puts a damper on sex and leads to other long-term negative effects. So they've committed themselves to restoring their precious prepuces, relying on do-it-yourself methods and a vast toolkit of skin-stretching devices.

Continued below.

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How It Feels to Be Circumcised as an Adult ([/read/men-explain-why-they-were-circumcised-as-adults-330](http://www.vice.com/read/men-explain-why-they-were-circumcised-as-adults-330))

People have been getting circumcisions for millennia, and it seems they've been trying to reverse their circumcisions for just as long. In the **1998 report** (<http://www.cirp.org/library/restoration/schultheiss/>) *Uncircumcision: A Historical Review of Preputial Restoration*, a group of German doctors led by Dirk Schultheiss wrote that foreskin restoration (or "uncircumcision," as the authors call it) was first mentioned in a passage from the Old Testament. Jewish men were driven to this unlikely act during the reign of Greek King Antiochus IV from 175-164 BC, in order to avoid persecution following a ban in Jerusalem on Jewish practices.

In the days of Antiochus IV, some Jewish restorers relied on a device called the *Pondus Judaeus*, a weight made of leather, bronze, or copper that let its user stretch his prepuce to completely cover the exposed glans. Today, men looking to reverse circumcision can turn to more advanced surgical options, but the vast majority of them instead turn to **home "tugging" devices** (<https://www.vice.com/read/point-v10n9>) that essentially serve as gentler versions of this ancient tool.

An aspiring tugger should probably consult a doctor before getting started, but the process doesn't require a huge operation. All you have to do is take the skin on your penis and roll it forward until it covers as much of the glans as possible. Then you hold it in place for an extended period of time with a retaining device—like the **Your-Skin Cone** (<http://tlctugger.com/your-skin-cone/>) made by the company TLC Tugger, or, for a more old-school method, a cross-shaped piece of medical tape. For extra tugging tension, add on a secure anchor like the TLC Tugger's **flagship product** (<http://tlctugger.com/tlc-tugger/>), and connect it to a weight or an elastic band.

<http://motherboard.vice.com/read/how-to-grow-an-artificial-penis>) **Need a whole new member? Motherboard explains how to grow an artificial penis.** (<http://motherboard.vice.com/read/how-to-grow-an-artificial-penis>)

Over the past 15 years, a sizable foreskin restoration movement has sprung up, supported by online forums, national advocacy groups, and a cottage industry of device manufacturers. Men commit themselves to this time-consuming effort in part because they want to feel greater sensations during sex—by shielding the head of the penis, or glans, they believe the foreskin makes it softer and more sensitive.

This promise of sexual reawakening isn't necessarily borne of scientific research— **one study** (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1464-410X.2007.07369.x/full>) from 2008 failed to find any evidence that men experienced a marked decrease in sexual satisfaction after circumcision. Some medical experts are also skeptical at the value of foreskin restoration. A urologist who **spoke with VICE earlier this year** (<http://www.vice.com/read/men-explain-why-they-were-circumcised-as-adults-330>) dismissed the practice as "voodoo," saying men who are restoring their foreskins "are fighting much larger demons."

Still, seasoned restorers insist there's great value to bringing back their 'skins, often stemming from deep personal and philosophical motivations.

Donald, a 45-year-old restorer in Southern California, says he got into the practice three years ago. He'd gotten a Prince Albert penis piercing when he was younger, and that made him realize he had the power to choose how his penis looked. When he started restoring his foreskin, he was able to take this even further, reclaiming agency over his prized sexual organ.

"The first time I saw my penis with a significant amount of coverage something clicked in my mind and I started seeing myself as I was intended," he wrote in a Facebook message. "I began to feel a wholeness that I had never had before."

For more on dick modifications, watch our video on penile implants.

Of course, tugging is a ton of work. It can take years to fully restore the foreskin, and that's assuming the prospective restorer would be OK with putting a weird, uncomfortable-looking device (like [this](http://www.foreskinrestore.com/dtr.html) (<http://www.foreskinrestore.com/dtr.html>) or [this](http://tlctugger.com/tlc-air/) (<http://tlctugger.com/tlc-air/>)) on his dick in the first place. There's also potentially wince-inducing mishaps or embarrassing accidents to worry about, and for all the efforts you put in there's still some things you can never get back—like the frenulum, a stretchy and highly sensitive band of tissue under the glans that restorers regard as a kind of male G-spot, which is sometimes removed in whole or in part during a circumcision.

It's understandable, then, that some restorers are more hardcore than others. Take Matthew Hess, for example. A seasoned anti-circumcision activist—or "intactivist"—he's spent years fighting against what he considers the circumcision menace, even going so far as to launch a controversial comic book called [Foreskin Man](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/matthew-hess-wants-to-save-your-babys-foreskin) (http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/matthew-hess-wants-to-save-your-babys-foreskin) that depicts mohels and circumcision doctors as nefarious, baby-traumatizing villains.

But when it comes to restoring his foreskin, Hess keeps things low-key, often wearing a simple Your-Skin Cone retainer but foregoing more complicated devices.

"I tried originally doing the straps and the weights and it was too much for me. It was getting in the way of work and exercise and biking and things like that," he said. "I wear shorts a lot, and to have a strap on your leg isn't going to work too well. At work, or just walking around, you could see the device kind of poking through my pants a little bit."

[Want to regrow your foreskin without all the tugging? Check out Foregen, a new company using regenerative medicine to help men regrow their 'skin. \(http://motherboard.vice.com/read/regrowing-foreskins-like-salamander-arms\)](http://motherboard.vice.com/read/regrowing-foreskins-like-salamander-arms)

On the other hand, there are guys like James, who's heavily committed to the process. He first got into restoring because his doctor gave him an extremely tight circumcision when he was an infant, leaving a small amount of skin on his penis that essentially condemned him to a life of painful, curved erections. To rectify this, James has committed to a daily routine of tugging sessions in the morning and just before bed. Though he'll take the occasional break, he's managed to make leaps and bounds on the **[Foreskin Coverage Index \(http://www.newforeskin.biz/CI/CIchart.htm\)](http://www.newforeskin.biz/CI/CIchart.htm)**—the universal measuring tool adopted by restorers.

At first James didn't even rank as a CI-1 on the chart—the lowest possible ranking. But now he's at a CI-8 with plenty of foreskin coverage. His success certainly has a lot to do with his diligence and ingenuity, but it also might stem from his collection of homemade devices. One of them is a heavy-duty piece of gear that lets him carry up to 11 pounds worth of weights.

"I want to be whole again. I want to look whole. I want to feel that way. And I want sex to be that way also," he said. "I'm pretty far along now, but it ain't all the way to what I was when I was born, that never should've been taken from me to begin with."

Any seasoned restorer would agree that James has made remarkable progress. But no matter how much foreskin he restores, he'll always have that original loss to contend with. He's still angry at the doctor who did the procedure. And he's still mad at his mom for approving it.

"I haven't spoken to my mom in over a year," he said. "My dad passed away quite a long time ago, but my mom doesn't see any wrongdoing in what they did."

Follow Peter Holslin on **[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/PeterHolslin\)](https://twitter.com/PeterHolslin)**.



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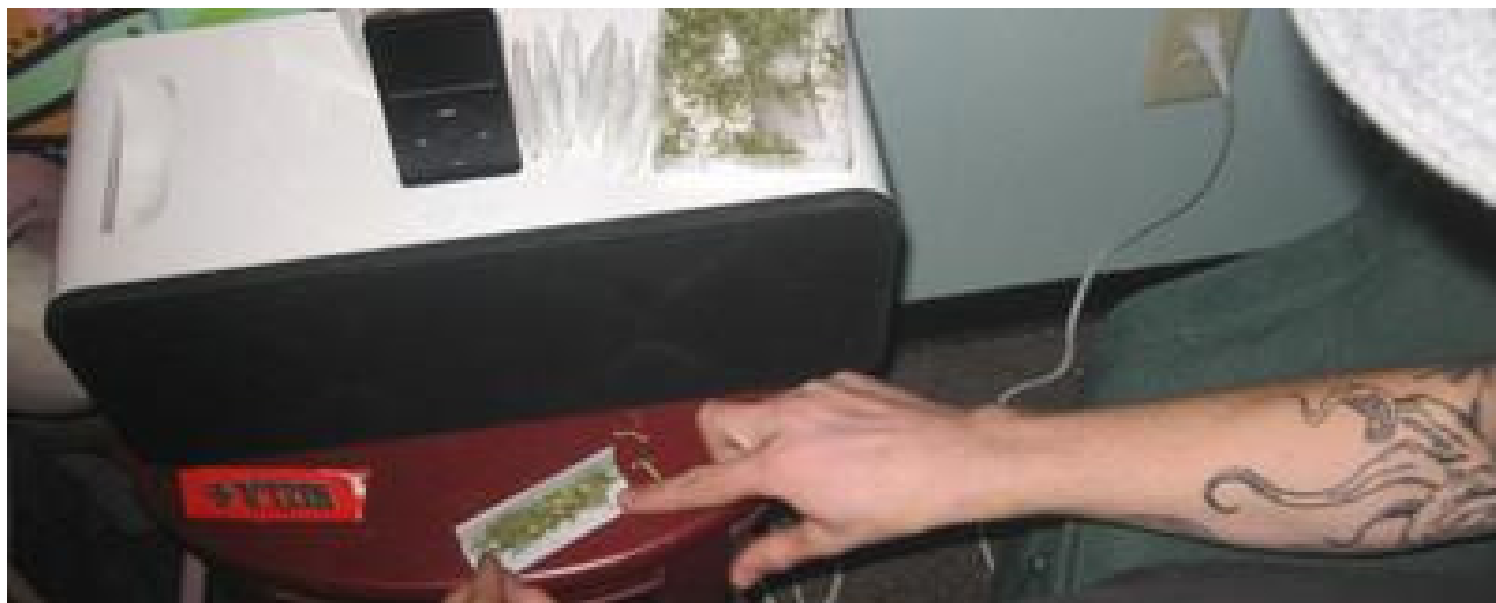


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COMMENTS



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Ron Low · TLC Tugger on Twitter at Intactivist

Circumcision alters sex dramatically by eliminating the frictionless gliding mode of stimulation and leaving the glans exposed to toughen up.

Like · Reply · 16 · Jul 1, 2015 3:20pm



Not Yours to Cut

"toughen up" is an understatement, Ron! www.notyournstocut.com/circumcision-ruins-the-glans

Thanks for all you do.

Like · Reply · 6 · Jul 1, 2015 3:41pm



Juan Andrés · Universidad EAFIT

While you are citing the Uganda trial about sexual satisfaction and function, other studies provide different results. Take Frisch's study in Denmark, 2011, or Bronselaer's study in Belgium, 2013. Why is a study in Uganda more relevant to the U.S. than one in Denmark or Belgium? Who knows. It's interesting to see the methodological differences, then the bias and ways to skew the results become aparent.

Like · Reply · 9 · Jul 1, 2015 1:40pm



Mark Lyndon

It's hard to take that Ugandan study seriously. The figures seem way too high, possibly due to cultural bias. The intact men recorded a statistically significant increase in satisfaction from 98% to 99.9% (vs 98% to 98.4% for the circumcised men), so it's hardly a ringing endorsement of circumcision anyway.

Kim and Pang 2006, studied 255 men circumcised as adults, and found that:

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/.../j.1464-410X.2006...>

"About 6% answered that their sex lives improved, while 20% reported a worse sex life after circumcision."

Like · Reply · 6 · Jul 1, 2015 2:53pm



Juan Andrés · Universidad EAFIT

Mark Lyndon yes, I've always wondered why the intact men, by the fact of joining the study, saw their satisfaction increased. That's beyond odd.

Like · Reply · 5 · Jul 1, 2015 3:08pm



Sandra Collisson · Edmonton, Alberta

Juan Andrés I believe it possibly feels more sensitive at first, as the glans is constantly exposed. But I'd be willing to bet that the satisfaction comes almost entirely as a placebo effect... the loss of the stigmatized foreskin that they were conditioned to believe is "dirty."

Like · Reply · Jul 2, 2015 4:43pm



Jonathon Conte · Events Coordinator at Bay Area Intactivists

"People have been getting circumcisions for millennia..."

The vast majority of those missing part of their penis did not consent to having their genitals altered. Most survivors of male genital mutilation had it forced upon them without their consent and when they were incapable of fighting back.

Like · Reply · 10 · Jul 1, 2015 8:48pm



JJ Hicks · Owner at Self-Employed

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