



# SKIN GAME

*In the U.S., circumcision has been standard practice for infant males for decades. Now, increasing numbers of adult males—gay and straight—are undoing the doctor's deed. Scott Seomin investigates.*

*photography by Florian Schneider*

**Cut or uncut?** For most of American-born men, foreskins are a foregone—and long gone—conclusion. By dint of social and religious tradition, circumcision has frequently been as automatic as the infection-preventing eyedrops babies get right after birth. Perhaps coinciding with the recent increase in international travel, which exposes Americans to their “unexposed” counterparts, many cut men have come to question a practice so pervasive that its aesthetic seems almost more “natural” than what nature itself gave us. But as it becomes more widely known that the long-held assumption—circumcision at birth is justified for medical and hygienic reasons—is nothing more than an *assumption*, the reaction has been increasingly angry.

So angry, in fact, that there's a new movement afoot to try to redress the wrongs perpetrated upon helpless infants. But once it's done, isn't it *done*? These days, it seems that even the undoable might be doable; there are at least a variety of options now available for those who feel compelled to try. (Some debate about the pros and cons of cut versus uncut always livens up a dinner party, but this article will focus on those who feel the need to return to the shape they were born with.)

“I resented the fact that somebody circumcised me at birth and I didn't have any say in the matter,” says Roland Clark, a 63-year-old Southern California businessman who invented a device to restore foreskin. “I wanted to be as nature intended me to be. I was frustrated that somebody else had something I didn't have, and I originally had, and it was taken away from me.”

But Clark's reaction is practically serene compared to the anger felt by some other circumcised men. "I learned what circumcision does, which is control and humiliate males and destroy and disempower the human spirit," claims Gary Parker, a salesman from Long Beach, California. "And then I was just heartbroken and angry. I felt extremely angry, cheated, depressed, and violated."

"Not being intact can stir up a lot of emotional anger, fear, and frustration," says 37-

Though the popularity of attempted foreskin restoration attests to the growing dissatisfaction with a custom in which the main "participant" is a nonconsenting nonadult, there is unfortunately no avalanche of reports attesting to phalanxes of newly foreskinned studs strutting around un-uncovered. By all accounts, the effort involved can easily be viewed by most as daunting (if definitely worth it for the very motivated).

John Kowalczyk, M.D., a Los Angeles urologist specializing in penile reconstruction,

reports that while circumcision is "very occasionally" medically indicated, state-of-the-art surgery has "yet to develop a satisfying technique" for reversing the procedure.

Even so, in 1980, Roland Clark decided it was time to address his own frustrations and that of others who felt cheated out of a prepuce. He invented the P.U.D., or "Penis Uncircumcising Device," one of several mechanical devices on the market that attempt to restore the foreskin. The P.U.D.—which looks something like a miniature torpedo—is made of surgical-quality stainless steel, comes in three sizes (medium, large, and extra-large), and several weights (ranging from ten ounces to 22 ounces). Installation is fairly low tech: Users simply place the flaccid penis in the scooped-out end of the device, gently pull the available shaft skin over the P.U.D. edges, and secure with surgical paper tape. The device lengthens the foreskin by stretching it with mild weight. "There is a urinary passage, so removal isn't necessary in order to relieve yourself," explains Clark, who notes that most customers see some progress within two to three months, and have "total coverage, some even when erect" in one to two years.

According to Clark, this, of course, depends on the amount of time the P.U.D. is worn. While

One man's  
painless  
procedure may  
be another  
man's test of  
endurance.



year-old massage therapist Brian Lawson, adding, "there is just no reason for the procedure, which I consider genital mutilation."

If these reactions seem extreme to many who would perhaps only consider the possibility of decreased sensitivity, consider the actual loss involved. When a male infant is circumcised, the skin that is removed would be equivalent to a three-inch by five-inch index card if left intact. According to Thomas J. Ritter, M.D., by adulthood this discarded skin would contain "over 50 million cells, 250 feet of nerve, and 750 nerve endings."

Familiar with these statistics, Brian Lawson offers more. "Doctors are removing around 51% of a tissue area rich in erogenous, pleasure-transmitting nerve muscles, which not only gives us pleasure but protects a really delicate part of our bodies."

## Cut and Curious?

### Product Resources

American Bodycrafters, Inc. (P.U.D. manufacturer): P.O. Box 7555, Huntington Beach, CA 92615, tel. 800-33-4MORE, fax: 714-374-0645. (\$135-\$165)

The Restore Skin System (T-tape and clip system): Evans Industries, Tucson, AZ 85726, tel. 520-743-9933. (\$99.95 + \$8.50 shipping and handling. Order includes tape devices, elastic straps, tape removal lotion, and informational video)

Foreskin Restoration Cones: Second Skin, P.O. Box 685, Robert, LA 70455. (\$54 including shipping)

### Publications

*The Joy of Uncircumcising!* by Jim Bigelow, Ph.D. (Marketscope Books)

*Foreskin: A Closer Look* by Bud Berkeley (Alyson Publications)

*Foreskin Quarterly* edited by Scott McGillivray (Brush Creek Media)

*The Joy of Being a Boy* by Elizabeth Noble with Leo Sorger (New Life Images)

### Internet Newsgroups

<http://net.indra.com/~shredder/intact/anatomy/index.html>

<http://weber.u.washington.edu/d60/gcd/DOC/>

<http://users.why.net/niks4wen>

### Organizations

Circumcision Resource Center: P.O. Box 232, Boston, MA 02133, tel. 617-523-0088. Ronald Goldman, Ph.D., Director

Doctors Opposing Circumcision (D.O.C.): 2442 NW Market Street, Suite 42, Seattle, WA 98107. E-mail: [gcd@u.washington.edu](mailto:gcd@u.washington.edu). Dr. George Denniston, President

National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males (NOHARM): P.O. Box 460795, San Francisco, CA 94146, tel. 415-826-3351. Tim Hammond, Founder

National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC): P.O. Box 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512, tel. 415-488-9883. Marilyn Milos, R.N., Executive Director