

VALUES CLARIFICATION – CIRCUMCISION

Adapted by: Janet Grabe, RNC, ASN, BSN, ICCE, CLC, CD (DONA)

The issue of whether or not to circumcise your newborn son is one of increasing concern to many expectant parents. For more than 15 years both the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics have held the official position that there is no valid medical reason for routine circumcision of the newborn. Yet many parents still choose to circumcise their sons for a variety of reasons. Circumcision began in America in the 1930's and rose until almost 100% of boys were circumcised. The rates of circumcision have been falling in the past several years and as of 1999, the rates of circumcision in the Western Region of the USA were 40% of boys were circumcised and 60% were not.

It is important for you to realize that this important decision is totally up to YOU. This worksheet is designed to help you clarify your own feelings about the issue and help you make a decision you are both comfortable with.

To use this worksheet, read each of the following statements about circumcision. These are expressions about *feelings* more than anything else. All of them have "truth" in them, yet there is little hard scientific data on which everyone agrees. You need to decide how each corresponds to your personal feelings and even more important, how important each of these concerns is to you. Rank each statement on a scale of 1 – 5:

- 5 – I agree with this statement and it is very important to me.
- 4 – I agree with this statement and it is somewhat important to me.
- 3 – This statement may be true, but it is not important to me.
- 2 – I don't really agree with this, but it is somewhat important to me.
- 1 – I strongly disagree with this statement and it is not an important issue.

(Couples may want to do this independently. If so, one of you should put your answers on another paper.)

IN FAVOR OF CIRCUMCISION

- ___ 1. A circumcised penis looks better.
- ___ 2. Circumcision may prevent later infections of various kinds; most are minor but some can be serious.
- ___ 3. He will look like his father and other adult males in the family.
- ___ 4. The pain of the surgery is temporary and the baby won't recall it.
- ___ 5. It's better to get it over with; if it has to be done later, there is more risk and more psychological trauma.
- ___ 6. He will look like other boys at school.
- ___ 7. It is easier to keep clean.
- ___ 8. Some religions require circumcision.
- ___ 9. Everyone else does it.
- ___ 10. Complications are rare.
- ___ TOTAL

AGAINST CIRCUMCISION

- ___ 1. An uncircumcised penis looks and is more natural.
- ___ 2. Personal hygiene is just as effective in preventing infection as surgery.
- ___ 3. Most males never notice this difference; there are too many other physical differences.
- ___ 4. It is quite painful at the time and for a few days afterward.
- ___ 5. The rate of circumcision later in life, around the world is low (about 5%).
- ___ 6. More and more boys are not circumcised. Many people look different in many ways.
- ___ 7. Children need to be taught to cleanse themselves just as they need to be taught to brush their teeth and wash their hands.
- ___ 8. These religious requirements do not apply to many people.
- ___ 9. I prefer to make my own decisions about what is best for my son.
- ___ 10. Possible complications include severe blood loss, infection, and very rarely, death.
- ___ TOTAL

Which column had the highest total? Would you both be comfortable with this decision? If not, look at the items, which you each gave the highest and lowest marks - - these are the ones you have the strongest feelings about and should investigate or discuss further. Also, in some instances, a “5” will not really be high enough. For you, one item may outweigh all other concerns. If so, let that guide you in your discussion and decision.