Male circumcision does NOT reduce penile sensitivity

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Does male circumcision affect sexual function, sensitivity or satisfaction? – a Systematic Review.

2675 titles from PubMed, EMBASE and Cochrane databases were reviewed for key words “circumcision” combined with “sexual function,” “sexual sensitivity,” “sexual sensation” and “sexual satisfaction”

36 of these studies contained unique and original data

19,542 uncircumcised and 20,931 circumcised men

36 papers were rated by SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network)
Scottish Intelligence Guidelines Network (SIGN)

1 Meta-analyses, systematic reviews of RCTs or RCTs
   ++ High quality, very low risk of bias
   +  Well-conducted studies with low risk of bias
   -  High risk of bias

2 Systematic reviews of case control or cohort studies
   ++ High quality, very low risk of bias, high probability that the relationship is causal
   +  Studies with very low risk of bias, high probability that the relationship is causal
   -  Case control or cohort studies, high risk of bias, significant risk that the relationship is not causal

3 Non-analytic studies, e.g. case reports, case series

4 Expert opinion

Of 36 papers rated by SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network):

2 papers were rated 1++ (high quality RCTs with low risk of bias)

4456 HIV-negative males ages 15-49

2210 randomized to immediate circumcision
2246 randomized to 24 month delayed circumcision

At 6, 12 and 24 months, men were surveyed by male interviewers using 10 questions from a standard questionnaire derived from the IIEF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At 24 month review</th>
<th>Circumcised</th>
<th>Not Circumcised</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied or very satisfied with sexual function</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>0.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ED</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problem with penetration</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problem with ejaculation</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pain during or after intercourse</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant but clinical significance is questionable

HIV-negative sexually active males ages 18-24

1391 were randomized to immediate circumcision
1393 were randomized to 24 month delayed circumcision

Sexual function and satisfaction were evaluated at 1, 3, 6, 12, 18 and 24 months by:
- Standardized history
- Physical exam
- Personal interview by trained counselors in the patient’s own language using standardized questionnaires

The questionnaires were similar to those used in the
- U.S. National Health and Social Life Survey
- British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles
- Global Study of Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

706 men in immediate circumcision group were reviewed 24 months after circumcision

**Penile sensitivity:** 64% reported *increased sensitivity* of the penis
7% reported *decreased sensitivity*

**Ease of orgasm:** 54.5% reported *increased ease* of achieving orgasm
10.9% reported *decreased ease* of achieving orgasm

**Satisfaction with circumcision:** 99% of circumcised men reported satisfaction with their circumcision
There was no difference between circumcised and uncircumcised men in
- Erectile dysfunction
- Ejaculatory dysfunction
- Dyspareunia
- Lack of pleasure with intercourse
- Penile sensitivity

Conclusion: Adult male circumcision was not associated with sexual
dysfunction or dissatisfaction in this study

Of 36 papers rated by SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network):

34 were rated 2 (systematic reviews of case control or cohort studies)
   11 rated 2++ (high quality)
   10 rated 2+   (well conducted)
   13 rated 2-   (low quality)

23 of 23 highly rated papers (1++, 2++, 2+) found no effect of circumcision on:

- Penile sensitivity
- Sexual arousal
- Sexual sensation
- Erectile function
- Premature ejaculation
- Ejaculatory latency
- Orgasm difficulties
- Sexual satisfaction
- Pleasure or pain during penetration

10 of 13 low quality studies (2-) reported impairment of 1 or more parameters of post-circumcision sexual function.

The low quality studies contained flaws in:
- Study design
- Selection of cases
- Selection of controls
- Statistical analyses
- Data interpretation

1,509 newly circumcised men compared to 1,524 age-matched uncircumcised controls

Assessments at baseline, 6, 12, 18 and 24 months were based on:
  - IIEF
  - Brief Male Sexual Function Inventory
  - Premature Ejaculation Diagnostic Tool

97% of men were satisfied or very satisfied with their sexual performance after circumcision

92% reported that sex was no different or better after circumcision

Conclusion: Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision was not associated with any sexual dysfunction over 24 months of follow-up
Practical clinical experience in practice of sexual medicine

Population of males 18 and over in U.S. is about 124,000,000

About 80% are circumcised

U.S. male population ages 18 and over:
   99 million circumcised
   25 million uncircumcised

If circumcision reduces penile sensitivity, there would be a large number of men complaining of this problem

The number of circumcised men who complain of inadequate penile sensitivity is very small

The number who enjoy satisfactory penile sensation and orgasm is very high
Summary:

The balance of evidence overwhelmingly shows that circumcision does not reduce penile sensitivity.