For the past decade, the percentage of male infants who were circumcised in the hospital has remained at about 56 percent, the lowest percentage since records began in 1979.

**Importance**

Parents often choose to circumcise their infant sons because of religious, cultural, or health reasons. Some research shows that circumcision reduces the risks of various diseases. Boys who remain uncircumcised are at a greater risk for Urinary Tract Infection, the human papilloma virus, and penile cancer, although the risk of contracting penile cancer among both circumcised and uncircumcised men is small. Circumcision may also reduce the risk of contracting HIV, although findings to date are insufficiently strong to be definitive. However, occasionally, complications such as bleeding or infection may occur with circumcision. Additionally, some research shows that infants feel pain when experiencing circumcision that may continue after the circumcision is complete.

In its most recent policy statement on the subject, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) notes that “current evidence indicates that the health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks,” and that “the procedure’s benefits justify access to this procedure for families who choose it.” More information is provided for parents at this AAP site: http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/prenatal/decisions-to-make/pages/Circumcision.aspx

**Trends**

Between 1979 and 2001, the percentage of male infants who were circumcised in the hospital remained relatively constant, ranging between 59 and 65 percent. Between 2001 and 2003, the percentage of male infants circumcised decreased from 63 to 56 percent. Since then, the proportion has remained approximately at this level. In 2010, the rate was 58 percent. (Figure 1)
Differences by Race

In 2008, the latest data available, white male infants were somewhat more likely than their black counterparts to have been circumcised (63 versus 58 percent, respectively). Until the early 1990s, white male infants were about eight percentage points more likely than black male infants to have been circumcised; subsequently, these percentages were similar until 2001. For the next few years, black male infants were more likely to have been circumcised; however, this trend reversed in 2007 and 2008. (Figure 1) It is important to note that these estimates include data for Hispanic infants, who may be of any race. Studies show that non-Hispanic white infants are significantly more likely than Hispanic or non-Hispanic black infants to be circumcised, even accounting for regional differences.

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*Total estimates include infants of all races.


Differences by Region

Male infants born in the Midwest were about two times more likely than those born in the West to have been circumcised in 2010 (71 versus 40 percent, respectively). That same year, 66 percent of male infants born in the Northeast, and 58 percent of male infants born in the South, were circumcised. (Figure 2)

In the western region of the United States, the percentage of male newborns receiving circumcisions has significantly decreased, from 64 percent in 1979 to 32 percent in 2007. However, this rate has increased in recent years, and was 40 percent in 2010. (Figure 2) The long-term decline in the region may be reflective of an increase in the proportion of Hispanic infants, who are less likely to be circumcised than are white and black infants.\(^{11}\)

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State and Local Estimates

None available.

International Estimates

Estimates for the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand are available at
http://www.cirp.org/library/statistics/

National Goals

None.

Related Indicators

- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=sexually-transmitted-infections-stis

Definition

This indicator refers only to newborn males with circumcisions performed during short-stay hospital visits. This does not include newborn males who were circumcised elsewhere. Circumcision is a surgical procedure in which the skin covering the end of the penis (foreskin) is removed.12
Data Sources


Raw Data Source

National Hospital Discharge Survey
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/hdasd/nhdsdes.htm
Appendix 1 - Percentage of Newborn Males Circumcised in Hospitals, Selected Years, 1979-2010

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1 Total estimates presented here include all races.

Endnotes


9 Hispanics may be any race, and estimates for whites and blacks include Hispanics.

