



circumcision

a lifetime of medical benefits



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On April 8, 2003, in his widely viewed TV program, Dr. Phil McGraw reassured a distraught young mother who was agonizing about having had her son circumcised 2 years ago, as a newborn. She had become convinced by anti-circumcision groups that circumcision "changed some of the wiring in his brain" and would lead to permanent emotional and sexual problems. She felt her son would later blame her for having allowed him to be circumcised.

In reassuring the mother Dr. Phil pointed out that millions of boys have been circumcised but don't hate their mothers. He cited an anti-circumcision author who stated that newborns remember traumatic events, and if they are subjected to pain they will later blame the mother, regardless of her intent. Dr. Phil's response to this unsupported claim was: "What a load of crap!" He noted that one-day-old infants don't encode pain messages to long-term memories. If they did remember distressing newborn events they would be much more damaged emotionally by the traumatic and life-threatening experience of being born than by having the foreskin removed.

Reinforcing Dr. Phil is current practice which dictates that local anesthesia be used in performing newborn circumcision. In 2003 a properly done circumcision should be painless. Unfortunately, Dr. Phil did not rebut the mother's erroneous claim, again gotten from anti-circumcision forces, that there are no medical benefits from newborn circumcision. Among the advantages proven by published medical evidence are protection against severe infant urinary infections, penile cancer, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, local

foreskin infections, inability to retract the foreskin, and cervical cancer in female partners of uncircumcised men. But Dr. Phil did graphically debunk the phony pseudo-psychological theories of the anti-circumcision groups. Right on, Dr. Phil!

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