

## Rebuttal: Should newborns be circumcised?

NO

Deirdre Andres MD CCFP

**M**s Smith, you have a lovely baby here. In order to make it easier for you to keep him clean and to prevent future repetitive and invasive procedures as he gets older; to make him look more like the older males in his family and society; and to prevent the possibility of serious diseases later in life, we recommend ... that we pull out all his teeth!

"You won't have to worry about teaching him to brush and floss. There will be less chance that he will upset future partners with poor oral hygiene, and he will be less likely to develop heart disease<sup>1,2</sup> and oral cancers<sup>3</sup> as he gets older.

"And, of course, he won't need that added expense of dental checkups or the pain and trauma of fillings, extractions, root canals, periodontal surgery, or other work that might need to be done in the future.

"It's best to do the procedure when he's young; he won't remember the pain. It would be much more disruptive and traumatic for him if it needed to be done in the future. Of course, we give him a needle for the pain.

"He might not be able to breastfeed as well for a while, but that won't hurt him in the long run. There might be other complications, like bleeding or infection, and some sources say that he might not enjoy eating as much when he's older, but again, there is no proof of that. Occasionally there can be long-term damage and some babies might even die, but that is very rare.

"Don't worry about the ethical implications of removing healthy tissue or that as a baby he can't give consent. I'm sure that legal case in Oregon will be resolved in our favour.

"On the whole, I think you'll be happier if we perform this invasive procedure to remove perfectly healthy tissue, because, after all, he'll never know what he's missing, and primary prevention of these problems is so much easier. Heart disease is very common, and we need to do whatever we can to prevent it. If he were to get cancer, we might even have to remove part of his tongue or other oral structures.

"After all, our neighbours to the south have a high rate of edentulous people, and we want to keep up with the Jones!"

(My apologies to dentated seniors everywhere). ❁

*Dr Andres is a family physician and Associate Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.*

### Competing interests

*None declared*

**Correspondence to:** Dr Deirdre Andres, 100—514 Queen St, Saskatoon, SK S7K 0M5; telephone 306 244-3019; fax 206 244-4737; e-mail [d.andres@shaw.ca](mailto:d.andres@shaw.ca)

### References

1. Genco R, Offenbacher S, Beck J. Periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease. Epidemiology and possible mechanisms. *J Am Dent Assoc* 2002;133(Suppl):14S-22S.
2. Beck JD, Eke P, Heiss G, Madianos P, Couper D, Lin D, et al. Periodontal disease and coronary artery disease: a reappraisal of the exposure. *Circulation* 2005;112:19-24.
3. Zheng TZ, Boyle P, Hu HF, Duan J, Jian PJ, Ma DQ, et al. Dentition, oral hygiene and risk of oral cancer: a case-control study in Beijing, People's Republic of China. *Cancer Causes Control* 1990;113:235-41.

— \* \* \* —



La traduction en français de cet article se trouve à [www.cfp.ca](http://www.cfp.ca). Allez au texte intégral (full text) de cet article en ligne, puis cliquez sur CFPlus dans le menu en haut, à droite de la page.

These rebuttals are responses from the authors who were asked to discuss whether newborns should be circumcised in the Debates section of the December issue (*Can Fam Physician* 2007;53:2096-9 [Eng], 2100-3 [Fr]).