

WHAT IS VOLUNTARY MEDICAL MALE CIRCUMCISION (VMMC)?

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Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) is the removal of the foreskin of the penis by a trained healthcare professional. The foreskin is the movable piece of skin that covers the head of the penis. Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (sometimes called “The Smart Cut” in Namibia) is when a man chooses to have the foreskin of his penis removed for health-related benefits. For example, research shows that men who are circumcised are significantly less likely to be infected with HIV if they have unprotected sex with an HIV positive female sexual partner.

How effective is VMMC in preventing HIV transmission?

VMMC reduces the risk of HIV transmission by approximately 60%. This means that if a man has unprotected sex after he has been circumcised, he is still at risk of HIV infection. Circumcision must be combined with other strategies, such as consistently and correctly using a condom every time the man has sex to prevent HIV infection, other sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. But because circumcision does offer significant protection against HIV infection, a man may choose to be circumcised as part of his HIV prevention risk reduction strategies.

Does circumcision reduce the risk of HIV infection for the female sexual partner? No, circumcision has not been shown to directly reduce the risk of HIV infection for the female sexual partner. But circumcision does have an indirect benefit because it reduces the risk that the male partner will become infected. If a woman has sex with an HIV-negative male partner, she is not at risk of HIV infection during intercourse. This is why VMMC also benefits women.

How else does VMMC benefit women?

Research shows that circumcision can reduce the risk of the female partner being infected by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cervical cancer. This means female partners of circumcised males are at a lower risk of developing cervical cancer. We will talk more about cervical cancer in the next edition of the magazine.

I am in a relationship and my partner is not circumcised. Should I encourage him to be circumcised and how can

I do this? There are many benefits to circumcision. These benefits are for both the male and the female partner. You can talk about these benefits with your partner. You can also

talk about the reasons he may not want to be circumcised. For example some men are worried that the procedure may be painful. This is not true. The procedure is a simple one. The man will be given a local anaesthetic (pain-numbing medicine) during the procedure. He may feel uncomfortable for a few days after the procedure and the healthcare provider will give him pain-killing medicine to take, to reduce the discomfort. With most non physically strenuous jobs he will be able to immediately return to work soon after the procedure. He will also be given instructions on how to care for his penis after circumcision. It is very important that he follows the instructions given by the health care provider. He should return to the clinic for a follow up visit two days afterwards and go again seven days after he is circumcised. He can return to the clinic earlier if he has any worries about how his penis is healing or if he notices anything unusual such as a lot of bleeding.

How long does the penis take to heal after circumcision?

It will take approximately 6 weeks for the penis to fully heal. During this time the man can continue with his daily activities as normal but he should not have sex or masturbate for 6 weeks after the procedure. This is very important to make sure that the penis heals properly. If the man has sex with a woman who is HIV positive during this time he will be at increased risk of HIV infection. If you are in a relationship and your partner goes for circumcision and wants to have sex immediately afterwards, you should say no and remind your partner that he needs to wait until the wound is healed.

Where can I find out more information about circumcision? You can go to your local clinic to ask for more information. If you have access to the internet you can get information from trusted websites such as www.cdc.gov, www.who.int or www.malecircumcision.org. You can also go to the VMMC Namibia Facebook page and ask a question if you want to.

Where can I go to be circumcised?

You can go to your local clinic to ask to be circumcised. If the healthcare provider at your local clinic is not trained to do the procedure, he or she will explain where to go to be circumcised. If you are in the following regions you can telephone these numbers for more information about VMMC in your area:

Zambezi: 0816183273; **Oshana:** 0816613389; **Erongo and Ohangwena:** 0817477135.

Read the next issue of *Sister Namibia* for an article about cervical cancer.

This article was written by CDC Namibia. ♀