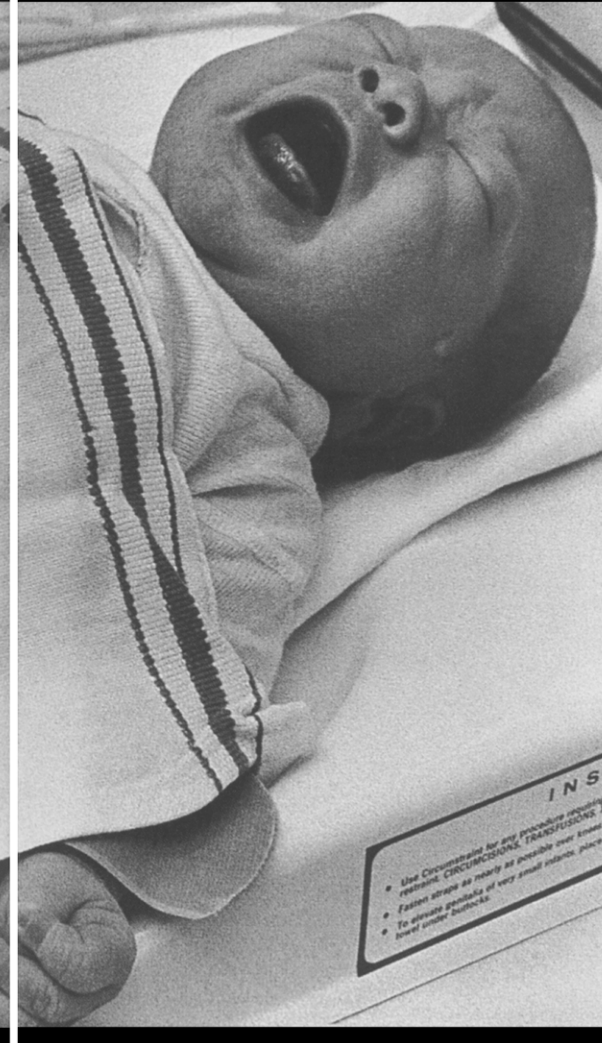
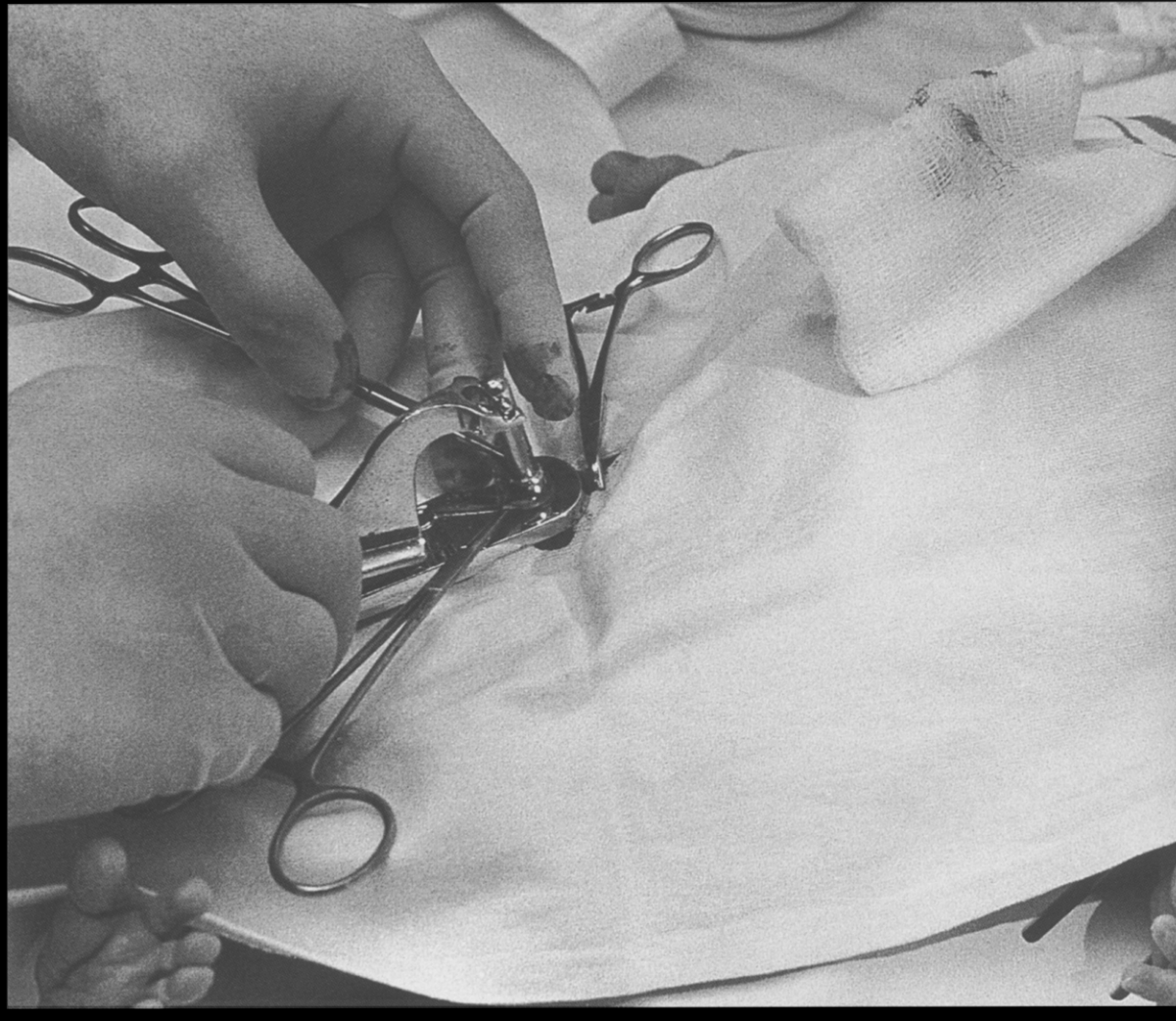


# SEPARA TED

For the typical American boy, life begins with circumcision, a painful cut to the sensitive skin on his penis. Is it necessary?



*The baby, J. Hernandez, is less than a day old...tiny head still slightly misshapen, eyelids puffy, mouth half-open in sleep. The nurse has taken him from his mother and is carrying him to a side room in the pediatric ward. The nurse pops on a white heat lamp with her elbow, removes the child from a blue blanket, and lays him in a molded plastic form bolted to the counter. This bathtub-like shell is called a Circumstraint. There are indentations for the baby's arms and legs. The nurse binds Velcro straps around his limbs, bends the light over him and steps back. The baby is naked and spread-eagled, and he begins to cry.*

**E**VERY 30 seconds a baby boy is circumcised. It is the most common surgery performed in America. It is usually done without anesthesia, and often without the consent of the parents. "I never questioned it," says Kyle Joseph, the father of a circumcised boy. "The doctor took him away, performed the operation and brought him back. That's just the way it was done. I was circumcised; he was circumcised. I don't even remember signing a consent form."

potential benefits are, how much it costs. Performing a circumcision without such counseling is inappropriate. Some people would call it criminal assault." Most parents don't know what circumcision really is, and yet 65 percent of them still allow doctors to do the surgery. America is the only country in the Western world that routinely circumcises newborn boys. Eighty-five percent of the world's men are uncircumcised. "The practice violates all seven principles of the American Medical Association's code of ethics," charges George Denniston, M.D., a Seattle physician and founder of Doctors Opposing Circumcision. "By definition, it's not even surgery. Surgery is removal of diseased tissue, or a repair of some kind." "Nonsense," says Edgar

That's typical, according to Craig Shoemaker, M.D., a North Dakota pediatrician and member of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) task force on circumcision. "Many doctors do not adequately counsel parents regarding circumcision—what the risks are, what the

# AT BIR TH

BY MARK JENKINS