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Circumcision to Cut HIV Risks in Africa

HIV infections and deaths can be reduced in millions of sub-Saharan Africa inhabitants through circumcision

Studies suggest that circumcision of African men can be the most appropriate method to reduce HIV and AIDS cases in the sub-Saharan Africa. This surgical operation could be the remedy against the numerous infections and deaths caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. Researchers state that in the next 20 years six million infections with the lethal virus and three million deaths can be prevented. Circumcision means the surgical removal of the prepuce (foreskin) of the penis. It is not a modern medical technique; it has been practiced since ancient times. Hebrew, Egyptian, Polynesian boys and men received circumcision as part of an initiation ritual or passage rite. The study is based on another research led in 2005 that showed that circumcision had unexpectedly numerous beneficial effects against HIV infections: the risk of getting the immunodeficiency virus was decreased with 60% in the heterosexual men that received circumcision. It is obvious that applying the same surgical method of prevention in Africans will be mostly beneficial for males. But it is also a safe medical measure for women, as HIV is mainly transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse. Nevertheless, the study still has to clear up how circumcision will affect the sexual passing on of the virus. In this respect, Deborah Jack, chief executive of the National AIDS Trust drew attention that circumcised men will still have to wear protection during sexual intercourse and stated for BBC: "However, people who are circumcised can still be infected with HIV and any awareness campaign would have to be extremely careful not to suggest that it protects against HIV or is an alternative to using condoms." Also, the report warned that "male circumcision alone cannot bring the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa under control. Even circumcised men can become infected, though their risk of doing so is much lower." The research is not complete yet and further trials are needed.