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**Lost & Found**

**Circumcised as boys, thousands of men are restoring their foreskins. Scott Richards discovers it's more than a fetish**

By Scott Richards

"I resented that somebody had circumcised me at birth and I didn't have any say in the matter," Roland Clark explains. "I wanted to be as nature intended. Other people had something I didn't, but I originally had it and it was taken away from me." A 63-year-old Southern California businessman, Clark is speaking about something he has in common with the vast majority of US males: a lack of foreskin. "We're the country that has routinely circumcised over 90 percent of our newborns, which is a maddening shame. I wish doctors and parents would stop this genital mutilation. Until that happens, at least men who are not intact can achieve restoration of what was taken away without their consent."

Foreskin restoration is a topic on which Clark is expert. As the inventor of the "penis uncircumcising device" or PUD, Clark has been helping the circumcised man gain total coverage of his glans since 1980, the year PUD hit the market.

Looking like a miniature torpedo, the device is made of surgical stainless steel and comes in three sizes (dubbed "medium," "large," and "extra-large," lest anyone feel slighted) and seven weights (ranging from ten to 22 ounces).

"Installing" the PUD is child's play. Place the flaccid penis in the scooped-out end of the device, pull the available shaft skin over the edges, and secure with surgical paper tape. Months or years later, and the PUD, with a little help from earth's gravity, has extended the foreskin by stretching.

"There is a urinary passage, so removal isn't necessary in order to relieve yourself," says Clark, who notes that users see some progress in two to three months and have "total coverage, some even when erect" in one to two years. This, of course, depends on the amount of residual foreskin you start with and the amount of time the PUD is worn. While longer wear means faster results, Clark recommends using the \$135 device "for just a few hours a day, every day."

Clark has secured a very comfortable living undoing a procedure that has secured a very comfortable living for American obstetricians since the 19th century, when baby boys have routinely had their foreskins cut off, usually without anesthesia. Circumcision advocates contend that penises *au naturel* render males more susceptible to urinary infection and genital cancer. Prophylactically excising the foreskin, they claim, eliminates the cause of phimosis (a too-tight prepuce), prevents the odiferous build-up of smegma, and even reduces the risk of HIV transmission.

But all these claims are hotly contested, and official medical opinion in the US has tilted against routine infant circumcision. "The circumcised penis is more vulnerable in the early years," weighs in Scott McGillivray, editor of *Foreskin Quarterly*, "because the inflamed, mutilated tissue shares a diaper with urine and feces." When circumcisions go awry, infections, amputated penises, and death sometimes occur. Phimosis can't be diagnosed in infants, whose foreskins are all unretractable, and in older males, a tight prepuce can often be stretched rather than clipped. And as for the "problem" of cheesy, redolent foreskins, McGillivray offers three words: "Soap and water."

But medical opinion on circumcision, pro or con, hasn't dented the practice among Jews and Muslims who cut for religious reasons. Nor has it stopped those who perform the operation from a sense of tradition. "The father is circumcised,

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his father was circumcised, therefore, they assume the newborn should be circumcised as well," McGillivray says. "They perform this ritual without once stopping to think what they are doing to the infant's body."

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### Foreskin fascination

"Painfully tight" describes the circumcised organ of Glenn Jenkins, who didn't think about his lack of foreskin until college. "I just used lots of lubricant to masturbate, and put up with a really tight cut," says Jenkins. "I wasn't really curious about it until I was older and had sex with an uncut man. Now I'm fascinated by men who are intact and I feel like I'm missing out." The 34-year-old San Francisco designer says his fascination with foreskin is something of a fetish. "There are a lot of things I find erotic about penises-- the shape, the curve, the length and girth, even a piercing," he says. "But when I see an uncut one I say, 'Hallelujah!' It adds a whole new dimension to sex."

PUD is not the only option for the circumcised who aim to regain that missing dimension. Other procedures and devices help the clipped partially recreate what they lost. Evans Industries of Tucson, Arizona, manufactures the "T-Tape & Clip system." In lieu of weights and gravity, this method relies on the constant pulling of a T-shaped tape that adheres to the penis on one end, and on the other, an elastic strap worn around the waist. For around \$60, you get tapes, straps, and a how-to video. "Foreskin Restoration Cones" from Second Skin in Robert, Louisiana, are also non-weighted. A set of three graduated, polyurethane cones sets you back \$54 dollars, and works much like the PUD.

### Tape your worm right

Stretching your way to a longer foreskin may seem painful. But experienced "restorers" say shaft skin is remarkably resilient. "All skin has elasticity, which is what allows you to grow and gain weight," Clark notes. "The skin on the penis is no different, so if you force it to stretch, it will happily oblige." Wearing Clark's device may garner extra attention, however, depending on the snugness of one's garment. "While wearing the PUD," the brochure reads, "two to four inches are added to your perceived size." Loose-fitting trousers are recommended for the shy, while a tight pair of 501s and the new "PUD GP"-- shaped like an actual penis-- are "for those who would like a bolder, anatomical look."

If any of this sounds dangerous, Clark claims that only one customer has encountered a problem in the 17 years he's been selling his invention. "This guy used the highest quality, tackiest of industrial packing tapes, and he couldn't get it off." Hence Clark's recommendation of surgical tape.

Gary Parker, a salesman from Long Beach, California, has used the "T-Tape & Clip" for about 18 months. Unaware of what he was missing until adulthood, Parker expresses strong emotions about his lack of prepuce.

"I didn't know how important foreskin was until I read an article in *Drummer* magazine about circumcision two years ago," says the 37-year-old. A procedure that many take in stride became for him a focal point of emotion. "I learned what circumcision does, which is control and humiliate males and destroy and disempower the human spirit. And then I was just heartbroken and angry." Parker-- who has achieved "about half-coverage"-- says the restoration process helps him to cope with his newly tapped feelings. "I mean, I can be angry about this for the rest of my life or I can try to do something with that anger. Replacing my foreskin makes me feel a lot better."

Unlike Jenkins and Parker, inventor Clark was aware of-- and mourned-- his missing anatomy as early as kindergarten. He began his search for regaining his foreskin when he was a pre-teen, and boyhood experimentation ultimately led to his stretching invention.

"As I got older I began to think of ways I could correct the problem. One of the devices I started out with was in junior high school, where I played trombone in the band," he says. "I kept looking at that mouthpiece, which had the weight but was too small. So I found an old tuba mouthpiece, modified it to fit my penis, and started using it. When I noticed it was having an affect on my body, I was thrilled." At first, Clark did this in secret but soon discovered that many of his circumcised pals were interested, fascinated, and eager to restore what was theirs for only a day. "We used the tuba mouthpieces, but I also made devices from wood doweling, which I would shape on the lathe in the shop. I was constantly looking for new raw material." Several decades later, the one-time building contractor became the "foreskin merchant" when he took "plain old round bar stock," manufactured the PUD prototype, and secured a patent for his new sheathe stretcher.

Once he started advertising the PUD, Clark was overwhelmed with orders from the cut and confounded. "Most orders are from the US, but I've heard from men all over the world. Often they tell me they felt violated and cheated. I hear a lot of anger and resentment in these men's voices. Some of this anger is directed at their parents and many men have expressed tremendous anger towards the

medical profession." Sales, says Clark, "are higher than they have ever been."

Although a few hours of foreskin stretching every day for a year or two may require a greater commitment than using your Ab-Roller three days a week, the rewards, for some, outweigh the hassle. "Not being intact stirs up in me a lot of emotional anger, fear, and frustration," says 37-year-old massage therapist Brian Lawson. "The fact that I was circumcised as a newborn was just the result of propaganda. My parents simply agreed to it because the doctor told them to. There is no reason for the procedure, which I consider genital mutilation."

If the use of "mutilation" sounds harsh, consider that when a male infant is circumcised, he loses, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, what would grow into "a piece of skin equivalent to a 3-by-5-inch index card" if left intact. This discarded skin contains "over 50 million cells, 250 feet of nerves, 800 nerve endings, and over 50 feet of blood vessels." Circumcision removes half of the penis's most sensitive tissue area, rich in erogenous, pleasure-transmitting nerves, and which protects the delicate glans.

Lawson, who has achieved some success in the two months he has been restoring and hopes "to be fully covered, even when erect" within a year, is not alone in his sense of loss. In 1992, anti-circumcision activist Tim Hammond polled 313 circumcised men-- albeit not randomly selected. Almost half cited a sense of parental violation, 62 percent expressed feelings of mutilation, and 84 percent reported "a degree of sexual harm," including progressive loss of glans sensitivity and painful intercourse.

"Circumcision is a brutal ritual rooted in superstition and should be abandoned," says New York physician Robert Van Howe. "There is no medical reason for exposing the tip of the penis. Most boys are circumcised because parents feel compelled to comply with social customs or religious beliefs. In some cases, parents simply agree with their physician's recommendation to circumcise. In other cases, physicians assume responsibility for a child and circumcise without parental consent. The procedure is a social and religious practice with absolutely no medical basis. The penis functions perfectly well with the tip unexposed."

PUD creator Clark, who has fully restored his foreskin, agrees. "When I look at myself now, I see myself as the way I should be. I feel complete, I feel whole. I feel that my body is now functioning like it should be. I don't feel mutilated anymore." Still, what was removed at his birth is gone for good. "The millions of little sensory nerves in the skin that was lost aren't going to be regenerated," he grants. "But at least I have the next best thing, a protected glans which is now ultra-sensitive."

"If they stopped circumcising around the world and as a result, I went out of business," Clark says, "well, I would be the only guy in the world who was happy he was put out of a job." \*\*

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