

Information for Parents About Phimosis

Phimosis [fy-mosis] is the medical term used to describe the condition where the foreskin is stuck to the head of the penis. During development before birth, the foreskin and the skin of the head of the penis are stuck together. This is normal. Gradually, over several months after birth, these two skin layers separate. The separation should be complete by age 5 years. If it is not complete, infection, inflammation and other problems can result.

The separation of those two skin layers occurs as new skin cells develop and the old skin cells flake off. As the old skin cells separate from the new skin cells, they sometimes accumulate under the foreskin. This can appear as a white bump under the foreskin. So long as there is no redness, pain or inflammation, these "squamous pearls," a medical term for the bump, do not cause problems. Gradually, as they enlarge, they move toward the edge of the point where the foreskin is separating. This allows that white material to drain.

In order to help the separation and to allow the foreskin to be pulled back, we sometimes use **betamethasone cream**. This is a mild steroid, not related to anabolic steroids. The cream decreases inflammation and allows the skin to stretch. Betamethasone cream frees the foreskin and allows it to be able to be pulled back in more than half of boys who use it.

Using the cream

You should gently pull back the foreskin as far as you can and apply a small amount of the cream (about the size of a match head) to the tip of the foreskin/head of the penis twice daily. Then release the foreskin and allow it to roll back.

Are there any side effects from using the cream?

There are very few side effects from using the cream. But if you notice redness, inflammation or if your son has pain, stop the application and call the office.

How long will it take to release the foreskin?

It usually takes 4 to 6 weeks for the separation to be complete. Most of the time, when the separation occurs, it is permanent. However, sometimes a second application of betamethasone cream is necessary.

For more information on this topic you are welcome to visit Dr. Hatch's web site: Genitourinary Development [www.meddean.luc.edu/lumen/meded/urology/guhome.htm]

For more information about Dr. Hatch please visit our web site [www.luhs.org/urology]

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Directions and maps available at www.luhs.org

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