My partner Moses wants to go for MC. Do you know anything about it?

Sure! My partner Charles did it - and I can tell you everything I know.
Get informed! There is a lot of talk about MC, but it is important to know the facts. This booklet can help you learn what you need to know! Read on and hear Chibeso and Mary discuss what MC is all about, the benefits and risks, and what happens when a man goes for MC. If you still need to know more, talk to a counselor or health provider!

This booklet will help you answer these questions:

- What is male circumcision (MC)?
- What are the benefits and risks of MC?
- How does MC affect women?
- How do I discuss MC with my partner?
- What about MC for newborns and young boys?
MC is the removal of the foreskin from the head of the penis.

The foreskin is the skin that covers all or most of the head of the penis of uncircumcised men. You can see if a man is circumcised by looking at his penis when he does not have an erection. When men are circumcised, you can see the head of the penis. When they are uncircumcised, the head may be partially or completely hidden by the foreskin. When the penis of an uncircumcised man is erect (hard), usually the foreskin pulls back and the head of the penis is uncovered.

MC is a simple surgical procedure. MC should be performed with local anaesthetic (to prevent pain) by trained medical providers, together with safe sex behaviour counselling and an HIV test.
If your partner is interested in MC, you should feel open about discussing it with him.

You can mention that you have heard about MC lately and you want to know what he thinks. If your partner is interested in MC, you should both be aware of the benefits and risks. There are many reasons — religious, cultural or health — why some men want, or don’t want, to go for MC. If a man wants to become circumcised for health reasons, you should encourage him to go to a trained and experienced provider who offers counselling and HIV testing. If your partner is willing to be circumcised, you should encourage him to go to see a counselor and you can go with him. The counselor will explain the risks and benefits of MC, and tell you about recovery. If your partner decides to go for MC, it is important that you and he abstain from sex until the wound is completely healed. You can help encourage your partner to refrain from sex by reassuring him you are completely willing to wait until he is healed.
Men who have had MC are still able to infect their partners with HIV and other STIs.

Women who have unprotected sex with a man who is HIV-positive are at risk of getting HIV, even if the man is circumcised. To protect herself, a woman should always ensure a male or female condom is used whether her partner is circumcised or not (unless the man was recently tested and she knows for certain that he is HIV-negative). HIV-positive men may be at higher risk of transmitting HIV in the healing period after MC. Sex during this time should be avoided. HIV-negative men may be more likely to get HIV if they have sex before healing is complete. MC does not affect sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure depends on many things, and is in the mind as much as in the body.

It is important to know the benefits and risks of MC.

MC reduces the risk to men of getting HIV when having unprotected sex, but it does not provide 100% protection. MC reduces the risk of inflammation under the foreskin. MC also reduces the risk of genital ulcers and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HPV (a virus which causes cervical cancer in women). MC reduces the risk of penile cancer in men. Infant MC reduces the risk of urinary tract infections in babies. MC is a surgical procedure and has some risks. Risks are small when circumcision is done in clean conditions by well-trained medical staff. Most complications are minor and easily treated. The most common risks include:

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Swelling
- Reaction to the anaesthetic
- Infection
Clients must wait for six weeks before having sex or masturbating to give the wound the chance to heal properly.

After the dressing is off, the wound begins to heal. Clients should not have sex or masturbate for six weeks after MC because it takes time for the wound to heal completely. If the client has sex too early, the wound can be damaged and take even longer to heal. MC does not provide 100% protection. After MC one should still protect himself and his partner by using a condom. Other prevention methods include abstaining from sex and being faithful to a partner who is faithful and HIV negative. Men who have had MC are still able to infect their partners with HIV and other STIs.
Parents should consider whether to have their sons circumcised.

Babies who are circumcised are less likely to get urinary tract infections and when they grow up, they will have a lower risk of HIV and other infections. MC for babies (in the first month) is simpler and recovery is faster than MC for boys or men. It is also safer, has fewer complications, and gives a better cosmetic result.
If you or your partner are interested in MC, it is important to find a provider who has been trained in MC and offers counseling and a safe, clean environment. Contact Society for Family Health (SFH) at 3958 for more info.