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Since August 2009, Makerere University School of Public Health led a general campaign about safe male circumcision (SMC) for HIV prevention in Uganda. The public sent questions about SMC through letters, phone calls, text messages and email. We answer the questions here for the next 4 weeks.

Is it safe to be circumcised by a non-medical person?

Many men in Uganda have been circumcised by non-medical circumcisers for religious or cultural reasons. However, it is safer if male

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS ON SAFE MALE CIRCUMCISION

Safe Male Circumcision Should Be Voluntary

circumcision is performed by a health worker, in a health facility and with appropriate tools. The health worker will examine you carefully to discover if you are fit for circumcision. Some men have conditions that make them unfit for circumcision e.g. if they have bleeding disorders, elephantiasis around genitals, sexually transmitted infections, or abnormal penises. Sometimes, one may need treatment before circumcision. Again, male circumcision should be done in a hygienic environment which can best be found in a health facility. Before and after circumcision, health workers are able to give professional advice about the health benefits of male circumcision, how to manage the wound properly for effective healing, how to avoid sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and general reproductive health.

What if I get a problem after circumcision?

If male circumcision is performed by a well trained health worker, problems are very rare during or after circumcision. If any problem arises, it will be minor. Moreover, the newly circumcised man will still be under the care of health workers and will get appropriate treatment and advice in time. Most complications during circumcision occur when the procedure is performed by untrained non-medical persons. Many males facing such problems are often taken to health facilities for 'reconstructive surgery' – to correct the mistakes done outside the health system.

Is male circumcision voluntary or compulsory?

In Uganda, male circumcision is voluntary.

For a man or boy to be circumcised, an adult (aged 18 and above) makes his own decision to demand the procedure, while a parent makes a request on behalf of a child. There are cases where a health worker may advise a man or boy to get circumcision such as when he is suffering from phimosis or paraphimosis i.e inability to move the foreskin off and back on the head of the penis - glans. In all cases, however, an adult must give his personal consent to undergo circumcision, while a caretaker consents on behalf of a child.

Next week, we shall explain how safe male circumcision is a simple and painless procedure.

For more information, call for free 0800200600 or send email to: understandingmmc@gmail.com