

Phimosis (Tight Foreskin)

Phimosis: Tightness of the foreskin or the inability to pull the foreskin back to expose and see the glans (head of the penis). Phimosis may appear as a tight ring or “rubber band” of foreskin around the tip of the penis, preventing full retraction. *Not all phimosis in boys needs to be treated medically.*

Phimosis is divided into two forms:

1. *Physiologic phimosis:* Boys are born normally with tight foreskin, and separation of the foreskin from the head of the penis occurs naturally over time. This type of phimosis is normal for uncircumcised boys and usually resolves around 5 to 7 years of age but can also occur at an older age.
2. *Pathologic phimosis:* This type of phimosis can occur due to infection, inflammation or trauma that may cause scarring of the foreskin, thereby causing the foreskin to become tighter than would be normal. With this type of phimosis, bleeding, ballooning of the foreskin (urine getting trapped under the tight foreskin causing swelling), pain with urination or difficulty with urination may occur. If this occurs, treatment may be necessary.

First-line treatment recommendation for pathologic phimosis

Rx: Betamethasone valerate 0.1% applied two times per day for two months. Alternative option is betamethasone dipropionate 0.05% or 0.1%.

To apply the cream, gently retract the foreskin to the tightest area. Massage the cream in for 30 seconds using a Q-tip or gloved finger.

Over time the foreskin may start to come back more.

Video on how to apply steroid cream: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghhAMc-rT_k&feature=youtu.be

Important things to know as the foreskin starts to retract:

- If the foreskin is ever stuck in the retracted position, this is a medical emergency.
- As the foreskin retracts you may see white stuff called *smegma* come out. This is a collection of skin cells sloughing from the head of the penis (glans) and the underlayer of the foreskin. This is normal skin shedding that helps the foreskin separate from the head of the penis. It can appear as a white pearl or white cystic lump and will eventually escape from the tip of the penis. Smegma underneath the foreskin does NOT increase the risk for infection or pain. If noticed when the foreskin is retracted, looking like white cottage cheese texture, you can wash it off gently with warm, soapy water and then rinse well, bringing the foreskin back to its normal position.

Algorithm: Phimosis (Tight Foreskin)

