

THABO'S JOURNEY

**BE SMART
GET CIRCUMCISED!**

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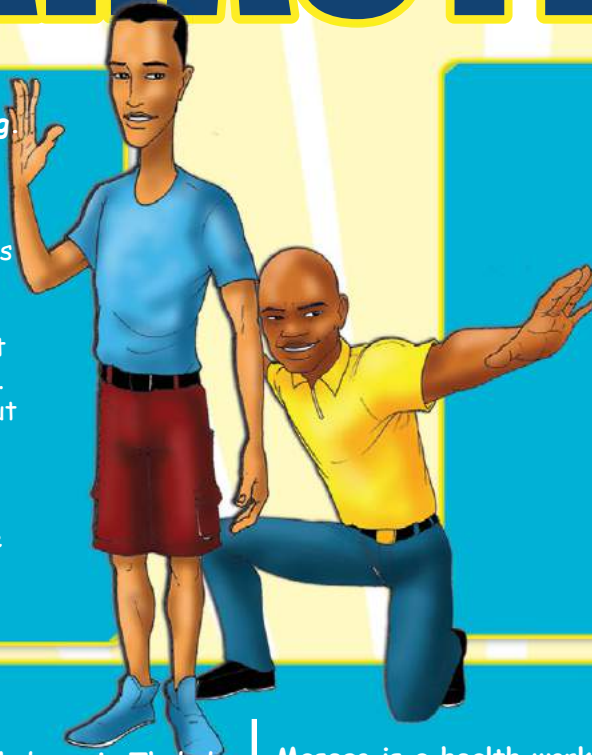
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CHARACTERS

Thabo is a 17 year old boy who cares about his well-being. He believes in making informed choices, so he can stay healthy and happy. His ambition is to play for the Zebras and believes that making informed decisions will help him reach his goal. He doesn't have all the answers but he's not afraid to ask questions. Whenever he needs advice about anything, he knows his icon and friend Noah is there for him, and his questions about Safe Male Circumcision (SMC) will be the beginning of an important journey.



Noah is Thabo's friend and icon. They've known each other for a long time and enjoy getting together to watch a game and play social soccer. Even though Noah is older than Thabo, and often acts like his older brother, Thabo is free to talk to him. He offers him advice about anything from his life ambitions to relationship problems. Thabo knows if he ever has a problem, Noah is the guy to talk to!



Mma Thabo is Thabo's mother. She is very close to Thabo and she believes that as a mother it is important for her to be involved in her son's life. She believes in giving Thabo the freedom to speak to her about anything including sexual relationships.

Masego is a health worker trained to provide information about Safe Male Circumcision (SMC). She is also qualified to talk about family planning, sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and other related topics. She plays an important role in the community because people know they can come to her with any questions. No matter how personal or embarrassing their questions are, Mary patiently offers information and advice.



Dr. Thuso is an SMC Provider. He is trained to perform SMCs. He takes the time to answer clients' questions and always makes sure they are comfortable. He is able to put people at ease and is especially concerned that young men have all the information they need to take care of their health. He has performed SMC on many boys and men.

ON A FOOTBALL FIELD SOMEWHERE IN BOTSWANA

That was a GREAT game! So what was on your mind Thabo?

I've seen you up on boards, and was wondering if you had been circumcised... I mean why all the hype around safe male circumcision?

Yes I am circumcised. **SAFE MALE CIRCUMCISION -or SMC-** is when the foreskin is removed from the head of the penis so the glans (or knob) is permanently exposed. And there are many benefits to it.

I am not circumcised. Shouldn't I have done it when I was younger?

No circumcision can be done at any age and GREAT new benefits have been found!

Really?

SMC can **REDUCE THE RISK OF HIV AND OTHER STIs**, and makes it much easier to keep my penis clean!

Is it painful during the procedure?

There is no pain because they give you medication during the procedure.

There is a bit of pain after the procedure but you given pain killers to reduce the pain



Where do I have to go? Do I have to go to a hospital?

You can go to any health facility where circumcision is offered.



"Do you think I should do it? I mean, I don't have to worry about HIV infection, since I'm **ABSTAINING**, right?"

You will need a recent **HIV test** result before you can be circumcised. Tomorrow we will go to the clinic so you can get more information

CIRCUMCISION OFFERED HERE



Noah I am nervous

There is nothing to be nervous about.

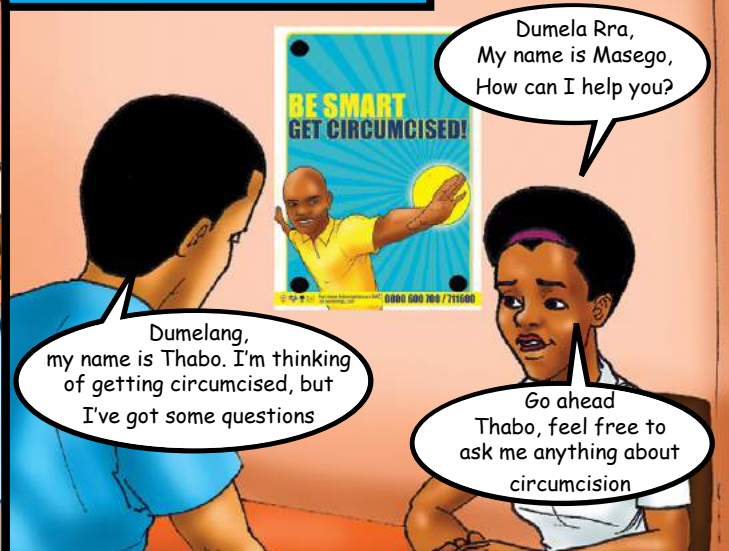
INSIDE THE CLINIC



Next client please!

We'll talk later

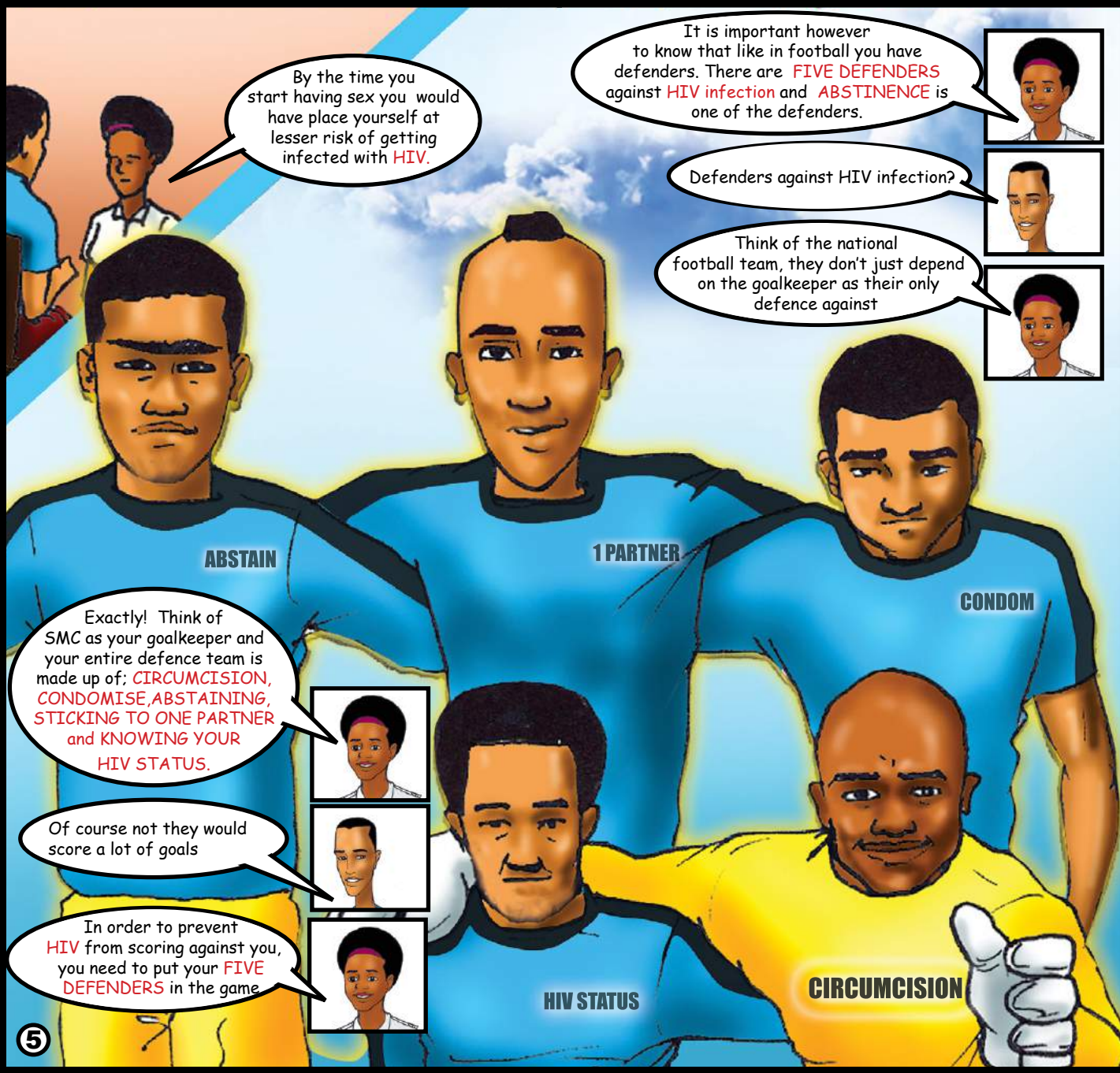
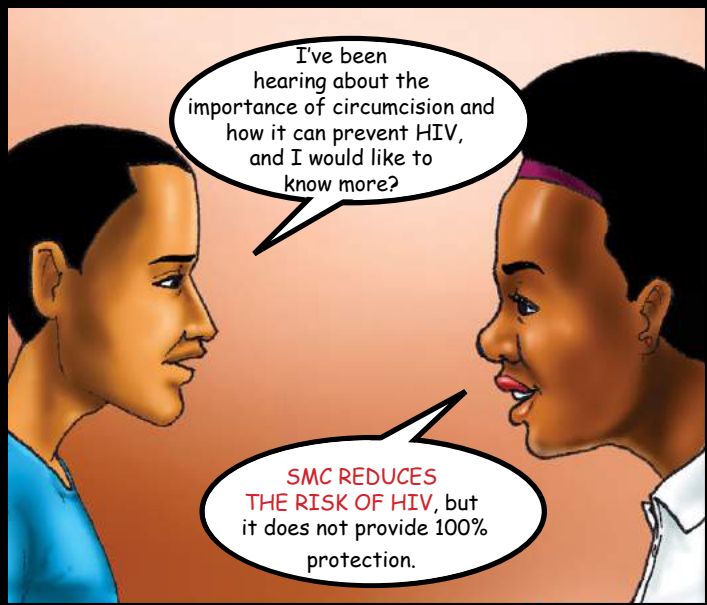
CONSULTATION ROOM



Dumela Rra, My name is Masego, How can I help you?

Dumelang, my name is Thabo. I'm thinking of getting circumcised, but I've got some questions

Go ahead Thabo, feel free to ask me anything about circumcision





I've never done an **HIV test**. Is it possible for me to take one today?

How old are you Thabo? Are you above 16?

I'm 17. Here's my omang"

It is important to know your **HIV status**, before you go for circumcision

Now that I know my status and have all the facts on SMC. I think I'm ready to decide if I want to go for circumcision



When will I know the result?

In just a few minutes.



Thanks for answering all my questions.

My pleasure. If you do decide to get circumcised, you will need to come with a guardian to sign your consent form as you are under 21 years of age.

Mama, there is something I need to talk to you about

Yes Thabo, what is it?

I was talking to Noah, about circumcision and I even went to get more information from a health worker. I'm considering getting circumcised.

I know circumcision has a lot of benefits. If you want to do it, I will certainly support you.

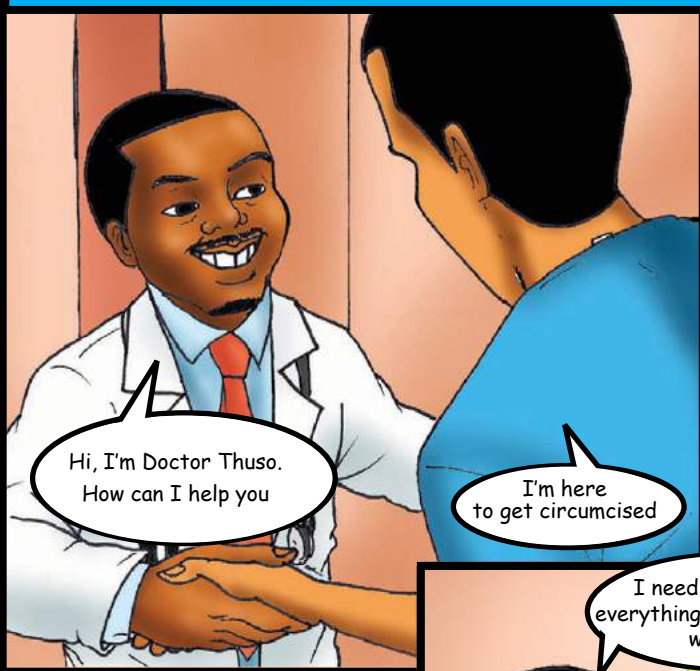
I even took an HIV test, yesterday.

It actually feels great to know your status.

It does. I'm proud of you my son.

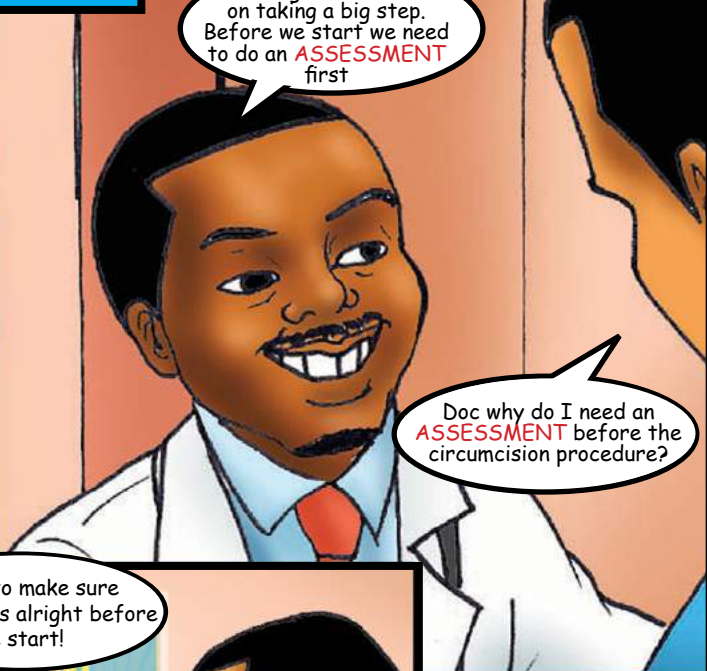


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Hi, I'm Doctor Thuso. How can I help you

I'm here to get circumcised



Congratulation on taking a big step. Before we start we need to do an **ASSESSMENT** first

Doc why do I need an **ASSESSMENT** before the circumcision procedure?



I need to make sure everything is alright before we start!

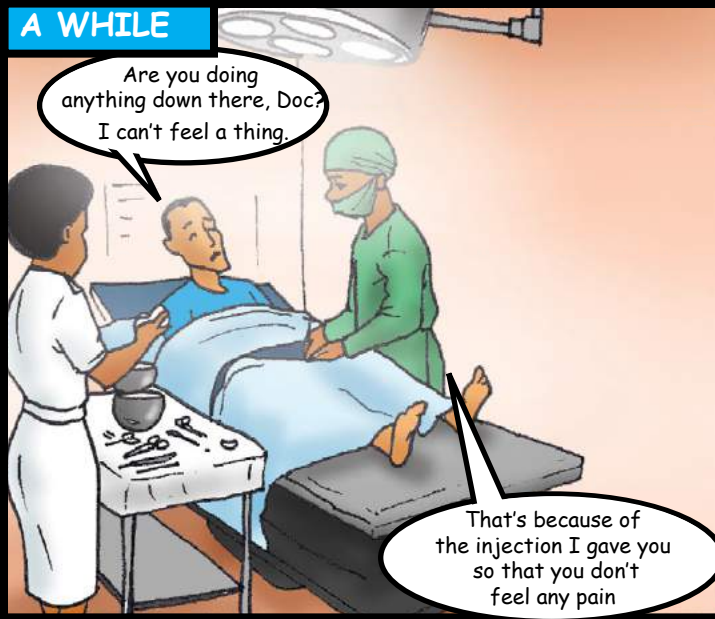
You'll find that I am very clean, Doc!



Yes everything seems to be fine. You're ready to get circumcised!

Is everything okay

I'm going to start off by injecting you so that the pain is minimised. You will feel as little pain as possible



Are you doing anything down there, Doc? I can't feel a thing.

That's because of the injection I gave you so that you don't feel any pain



Everything's fine... one more stitch and I'm done!



Noah was right. This isn't so bad.

There you go. It's over! Stay in the recovery room for a while and then you can go home as soon as we are sure you are ok.



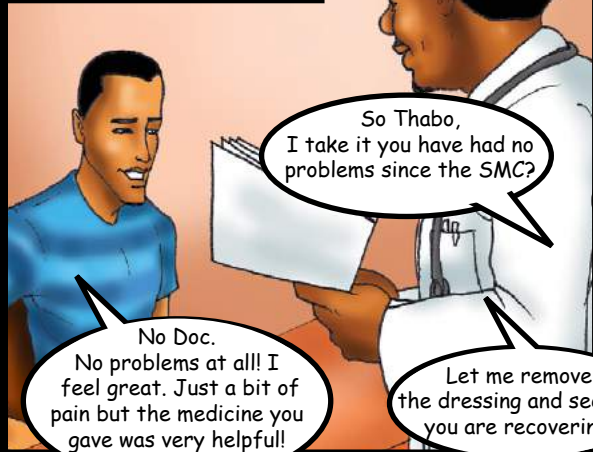
What can I do to recover quickly, Doc?

REST FOR A DAY OR TWO and keep the genital area **CLEAN AND DRY** and remember, no sex or masturbation for **SIX WEEKS!**



I'll see you a day after tomorrow for a review. If you have any problems before please call us or come back

TWO DAYS LATER

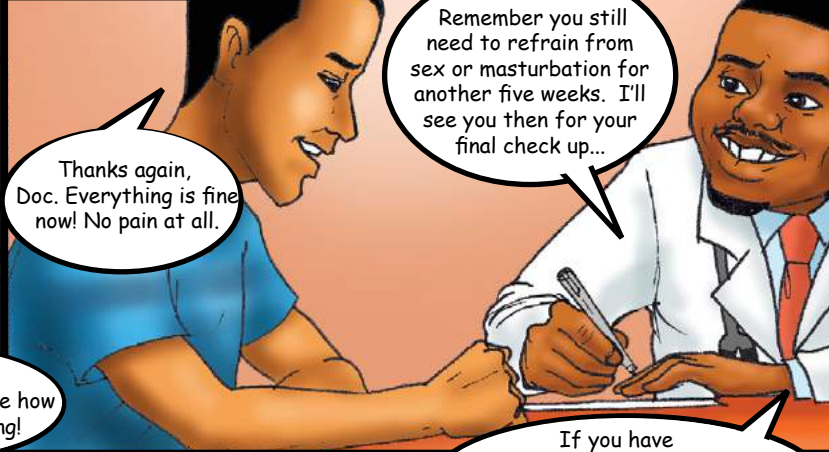


So Thabo, I take it you have had no problems since the SMC?

No Doc. No problems at all! I feel great. Just a bit of pain but the medicine you gave was very helpful!

Let me remove the dressing and see how you are recovering!

A WEEK LATER



Thanks again, Doc. Everything is fine now! No pain at all.

Great! Remember you still need to refrain from sex or masturbation for another five weeks. I'll see you then for your final check up...

If you have any problems or questions before then feel free to come see me or a health worker!

SIX WEEKS LATER



So how did everything go, Thabo?

It wasn't bad at all! Just came back from my final check up and I've completely healed

I'm glad I got circumcised and Mama says she's very proud of me for getting circumcised.

Thanks for your advice Noah. You helped me a lot.



No problem!

Hey, here comes your friend



I need to talk to you, Noah. I'm thinking of going for circumcision...

Don't worry Tebza...we can tell you all about it.

MORE INFORMATION ON CIRCUMCISION

Male circumcision is the removal of a man's foreskin and is one of the oldest and most common operations in the world.

Male circumcision has recently been proven to reduce the incidence of HIV by 60% in HIV negative men. The inside of the foreskin has got HIV target cells is soft, moist and is more likely to get a tiny tear that allows HIV to enter the body more easily. Therefore removal of the foreskin reduces the chances of HIV entering the body.

After circumcision it is essential that men abstain from all sexual activity, including masturbation and sex with a condom, for at least 6 weeks until the wound heals completely.

Before the wound heals, the risk of HIV infection is higher, because HIV target cells are exposed. Therefore HIV negative men are more likely to get infected.

Male circumcision has other health benefits, such as:

- Lowers the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections and penile cancer.
- It is easier to clean
- Reduces the chances of transmitting the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) to female partners, which causes cervical cancer
- Reduces the chances of getting urinary tract infections

As long as male circumcision is carried out by a qualified doctor in a sterile clinic, the risks are minimal.

SMC for the prevention of HIV is not recommended for HIV positive men because they are already positive. However HIV positive can have other benefits, such as hygiene, prevention of STI's and penile cancer.

Remember, circumcision gives only partial protection against HIV and circumcised men can still get HIV through unprotected sex. Therefore it is important to always abstain.



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WHAT CAN I DO TO RECOVER QUICKLY AFTER CIRCUMCISION

Proper care and attention can help you heal. Complete recovery after SMC takes about 6 weeks. Follow this advice and contact your doctor if you have any problem.

- Once you return home, you should rest before resuming work or school. This will help the wound heal.
- You can bath the day after surgery, but do not let the dressing get wet. It is important to keep your penis clean and dry at all times.
- You may experience a little pain or swelling around the wound. This is normal but check occasionally to make sure it does not get worse.
- Do not pull or scratch the wound while it is healing.
- Do not have sexual intercourse (even with a condom) or masturbate for at least 6 weeks. Even though the pain may have gone away, this does not mean the wound is healed.
- Once the bandage is removed and bleeding has stopped, wear loose-fitting clean underwear and change underwear on a daily basis.
- Take any medication as directed by your doctor.

How do I know if there is a problem after surgery?

Return to the hospital immediately if you have any of these symptoms after surgery:

- Bleeding that does not stop or gets worse
- Severe pain
- Difficulty urinating
- Pus coming out of the wound
- Increased swelling
- A fever within one week of surgery



COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Please answer a few basic questions below

Age:.....

Location Name:

Rating: Please rate your answers

4) Strongly Agree 3) Agree 2) Disagree 1) Strongly Disagree

1. The comic book was interesting
2. The comic book was easy to understand.....
3. I learned a lot from the comic book
4. Is the language used comprehensive.....
5. Is the comic book culturally sensitive.....
6. Do the pictures relate to the storyline.....
7. I would encourage a friend to read the comic book
8. I find reading this comic book boring.....
9. After reading the comic book I now confidently know the facts about SMC
10. I disliked the characters
11. The comic book characters were interesting
12. I find reading this comic book confusing
13. I could easily identify with the main character
14. After reading the comic book I have the confidence to discuss SMC with my friends.....
15. After reading the comic book, I would be confident enough to encourage a friend to get circumcised?
-
16. The comic book is attractive

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

If you have any other comments that you feel we should know about, please feel free to write them here.

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