

Health

# Circumcision protest group to demonstrate in Princeton

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By [Kathleen O'Brien | For Inside Jersey](#)

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While the American Academy of Pediatrics says circumcision does bring some health benefits, an activist group that objects to circumcision objects to the procedure. (Photo from ThinkStock)

If you're in Princeton Wednesday and happen to see a bunch of people who appear to be wounded in a very painful manner, don't call 911.

They're part of a group called [The Bloodstained Men](#) who are opposed to circumcision, and [they've been traveling to cities in the Northeast](#) to draw attention to what they believe is needless surgery on baby boys.

Their attire is designed to shock: white pants with red paint daubed over the groin. They refer to themselves as "intactivists," or activists who favor intact genitals.

Craig Adams, of Dover, one of the demonstration organizers, said he became interested in the issue after the birth of his son in 2013. He and his wife declined three separate inquiries about circumcision while at the hospital, prompting one nurse to remark to their newborn, "You're a lucky baby."

That triggered memories of a painful surgery he had at the age of five - surgery he now suspects was caused by his own infant circumcision. (The problem it addressed is called [meatal stenosis](#), or a narrowing of the urinary tube within the penis.)

"I was born healthy. Why was I altered?," he said. "This seems completely unethical to me."

Adams is Catholic, yet understands that circumcision is a time-honored Jewish religious rite. But even then, he doesn't fully agree that a parent has the right to irrevocably change another person's body - even if that person is a newborn.

"When you alter the child, you alter the man or the woman your child becomes," he said. "This is a permanent change."

Adams said he expects only a small number of demonstrators, and their goal is non-confrontational education.

They've been chastised for their graphic attire by passersby at previous demonstration who have said, "There are children here!," Adams said. He finds that criticism ironic, since The Bloodstained Men considers itself an advocacy group for children.

Circumcision, the removal of all or a portion of the foreskin of the penis, has the backing of the American Academy of Pediatrics because it confers some health benefits: reduction of the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including the HIV virus. However, the medical group stopped short of recommending it as part of routine care, saying parents should decide for themselves.

The demonstration - which Adams said will be a quiet affair - will be held along Nassau Street, close to Princeton University. The intent is to get college-aged onlookers to think about the issue, he said, adding, "Older people, they get stuck in their ways."

*Kathleen O'Brien may be reached at [kobrien@njadvancemedia.com](mailto:kobrien@njadvancemedia.com). Follow her on Twitter [@OBrienLedger](#). Find [NJ.com on Facebook](#).*