

## Case 118 A foreskin problem in a child



Figure 118.1

*The parents brought this little boy, aged nearly 4 years, to the surgical clinic because they had never been able to retract his prepuce. Apart from this, the child was entirely well. His father had been circumcised as a baby.*

### What is your diagnosis?

Phimosis – the term implies gross narrowing of the preputial orifice.

### What often leads to the development of this condition?

Although this may occur as a congenital condition, it often results from repeated trauma of forcible attempts to retract the baby's foreskin or may result from chronic balanitis.

### What is the natural history of the prepuce in children?

The prepuce is normally non-retractile in the first few months of life, due to congenital adhesions between the glans and the prepuce. By the end of the first year, 50% can be retracted easily, and the great majority are retractile by the third or fourth year.

### What is the function of the prepuce in the baby?

The prepuce protects the glans and the urethral orifice from the excoriation of ammoniacal dermatitis.

### What are the indications for circumcision in children?

Circumcision may be requested by the parents on religious grounds. It is indicated when there is established organic phimosis, as in this case, or in those instances when the prepuce cannot be retracted after the age of 6.