Your baby's bris marks an important milestone in his life, so take steps to keep the ritual as healthy as possible.

LEARN MORE.

THESE MAJOR HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS RECOMMEND AGAINST METZITZAH B'PEH:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Infectious Diseases Society of America
- Israel Ambulatory Pediatric Association
- Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society

NYC Health

Make a **SAFE BRIS** for your baby

Know the risks of METZITZAH B'PEH

Metzitzah B'Peh:
KNOW THE RISK

When a baby is circumcised, some ritual Jewish circumcisers (mohelim) do a practice called metzitzah b'peh. Metzitzah b'peh is when the mohel uses his mouth to suck blood away from the baby's circumcision wound as part of the circumcision ritual.

After metzitzah b'peh, some babies can get sick with herpes, which can even lead to death.

Public health experts have found that metzitzah b'peh can put babies at risk of getting a harmful virus called **herpes simplex virus type 1 or HSV-1.**

Many adults carry HSV-1 in their bodies. They may have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, such as cold sores. Unlike adults, babies are too young to fight the virus. If your baby gets the virus, he could have brain damage, develop a lifelong disability or, in some cases, die.

Medicines can help treat the symptoms, but your son will have the virus for the rest of his life.

A baby can get the virus when the mohel's saliva gets on the baby's skin and circumcision wound. **If a mohel does metzitzah b'peh, even for just a moment, there is no way to avoid this risk.**

Even if the mohel doesn't have cold sores near his mouth, he could still have the virus and not know it. Some mohelim rinse their mouths or take medicines before performing metzitzah b'peh. If the mohel has the virus, these steps do *not* make metzitzah b'peh safe for your baby.

Example of skin blisters due to herpes simplex virus type 1 infection. Courtesy of Philip S. Larussa, MD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before the Bris

- **TALK WITH YOUR BABY'S DOCTOR ABOUT METZITZAH B'PEH.**
- **BEFORE YOU HIRE THE MOHEL FOR THE BRIS, ASK IF HE DOES METZITZAH B'PEH.**
  Some parents say if they'd known that the mohel planned to do metzitzah b'peh, they would have asked him not to do it.
- **IF YOU DON'T WANT METZITZAH B'PEH, TELL THE MOHEL YOU DO NOT WANT IT.**
  If you tell the mohel that you don't want him to do metzitzah b'peh, he is expected to respect your wishes.

After the Bris

- **IF A MOHEL DID PERFORM METZITZAH B'PEH DURING YOUR BABY'S CIRCUMCISION,**
  watch his skin for little bumps or blisters, especially on or around your baby's genitals and buttocks. If you see these or any other sign that your baby is sick, or if your baby is not acting normally, talk to a doctor right away.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
TALK TO YOUR BABY'S DOCTOR OR CALL 311.