

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

Have 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.

Doctors and 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**.

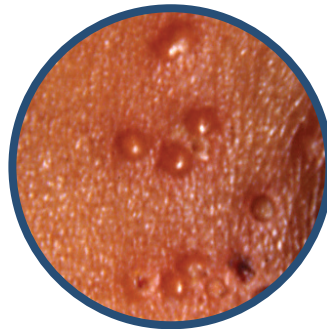
Many adults carry HSV-1 in their bodies. They may have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, such as cold sores. Unlike adults, babies are too young to fight the virus. If your baby gets the virus, he could have brain damage, develop a lifelong disability or, in some cases, die.

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 performs metzitzah b'peh, even for just a moment, there is no way to avoid this risk of herpes infection.**

To protect the health of New York City's infants, the Commissioner of Health has ordered mohelim identified as having infected a baby with HSV-1 through metzitzah b'peh to not perform this practice during the circumcision ritual.

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

The New York City Health Department advises against metzitzah b'peh.

Before you hire a mohel for the bris, ask him 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 you don't want him to do metzitzah b'peh, he is required to respect your wishes.

If you do decide to include metzitzah b'peh during your son's bris, take the following steps:

Before the Bris

- **TALK WITH YOUR BABY'S DOCTOR ABOUT METZITZAH B'PEH.**
- **BEFORE YOU HIRE A MOHEL FOR THE BRIS, ASK IF HE HAS:**
 - Tested positive for herpes
 - Received an order from the Commissioner of Health to not perform metzizah b'peh
- **IF THE MOHEL ANSWERS "YES" TO EITHER OF THESE QUESTIONS, OR IF HE HAS NOT BEEN TESTED FOR HERPES, LOOK FOR ANOTHER MOHEL.**

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 this 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.**