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Dear Health Care Provider:

Some of the families you treat may have sons for whom Jewish ritual circumcisions will be performed. Some religious circumcisers perform direct oral suction of the infant penis during circumcision. During direct oral suction, the person performing circumcision places his mouth on the newly circumcised penis and sucks blood away from the circumcision wound.

The New York City Health Code now requires written parental consent before direct oral suction can be performed as part of circumcision¹. Specifically, parents must be informed that the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) advises against direct oral suction because it exposes an infant to the risk of transmission of herpes simplex virus infection, which may result in brain damage or death. The consent must identify the person performing the circumcision and must be signed by at least one parent. One copy of the signed consent is for the parents. The person performing the circumcision must retain another copy for one year.

Because you are likely to have contact with new parents before they arrange circumcision for their sons, you are uniquely poised to make parents aware both of the risk for herpes transmission that direct oral suction poses, and of the fact that they must consent prior to the performance of direct oral suction.

We are enclosing English and Yiddish sample consent forms, entitled "Consent to perform oral suction during circumcision." Parents may use these forms if they agree to the performance of direct oral suction. These consent forms are also available on the NYC DOHMH website:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/std/consent-form-sample.pdf> (English) or,
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/std/consent-form-yiddish.pdf> (Yiddish) or,

by going to nyc.gov and searching using the key words "consent oral suction", or by calling 311. Please distribute these forms and information to any of your patients who are considering ritual Jewish circumcision. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Susan Blank, MD, MPH

¹ New York City Health Code, Section 181.21