

## **SURGICAL CORRECTION DOES NOT ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR HYPOSPADIAS COUNSELING**

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Hypospadias occurs in its mildest, most distal, form in as many as 1 in 125 newborn males in the United States. Many parents, surgeons, and other allied health professionals assume that successful reconstructive surgery will eliminate or minimize any potential psychological repercussions associated with mild hypospadias; however, there are few studies that explore this issue. Therefore, we conducted an anonymous in-depth survey of adult men (n=158, mean age 44 years) born with mild hypospadias (glanular or subcoronal). Men who underwent corrective surgery reported similar satisfaction with penile cosmetic appearance but were slightly less satisfied with overall function than those who did not undergo correction. Regardless of surgery, the vast majority (more than 86%) of respondents were aware during childhood that their penis differed from the norm. Yet most (more than 74%) reported that their parents never discussed the condition with them and did not learn the proper name for their condition until adulthood. Those who underwent corrective surgery were more likely to report being ashamed of their condition during childhood and reported greater embarrassment as adults when their penis is viewed by sexual partners. Fewer than 13% of those who underwent corrective surgery had professional counseling during childhood or adolescence, yet nearly one in three reported often feeling depressed because of their condition, nearly one in four contemplated suicide, and one in ten attempted suicide. Those who did not undergo surgery were far less likely to report depression or suicidal thoughts. Our survey results suggest that surgical correction of hypospadias does not eliminate potential psychological difficulties and, without appropriate communication or follow-up counseling, may actually exacerbate them. We recommend that health care providers stress the importance of open communication between parent and child, and urge follow-up counseling regardless of hypospadias severity and regardless of surgical correction.

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