

Buried Penis - A Hidden Problem in Obese Children

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Abstract

Buried penis is a condition that can affect boys and adult men. In this condition, the penis is of normal size but is hidden under the skin of the abdomen, thigh, or scrotum. We report a case of a 12 year old obese boy who was brought by his parents to primary care physician with concern of inability to visualize his penis few years after the religious circumcision.

Keywords: Buried Penis; Children; Skin

Introduction

Although buried, or hidden, penis is usually apparent at birth, it can also develop later in life. It can occur in males of any age but commonly seen in infants and toddlers. The condition can be caused by abnormalities in the penis's ligaments, morbid obesity or swelling around the scrotum. It can lead to physical and psychological problems and treatment for the condition is usually surgical [1].

Case History

A 12 year old obese boy was brought by his parents to primary care physician with concern of inability to visualize his penis few years after the religious circumcision. Upon examination penis was seen deep buried beneath the suprapubic skin and fat (Figure 1). The child per se had no urinary symptoms or soiling of clothes during micturition. Upon manipulation by the child he could grasp the penis and it would become fully visible with normal structure (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The scrotum was well developed and child had normal growth and milestones. Laboratory parameters showed

normal TSH, testosterone and normal adrenal and genital imaging. The child was referred to paediatric surgeon and child psychologist for further treatment and advice.

Figure 1: Buried penis.

Figure 2: Visible penis upon skin manipulation.

Figure 3: Spontaneous morning penile tumescence.

Discussion

The buried penis was first described by Keyes in 1990, and he defined it as “absence of penis which occurs when the penis lacks its proper sheath of skin and lies beneath the integument of abdomen, thigh or scrotum [1]. Buried penis in adolescents and adults is largely an acquired condition because of obesity, lymphedema, penile trauma including circumcision and infections [2]. Buried penis is a known entity after circumcision and in obese children. It settles on its own with time but at times it is essential to reconstruct the

overlying skin for normal appearance of penis [3]. With the rising prospect of more obese children population, paediatric surgeons, plastic surgeons and urologists are likely to encounter this problem more often.

Buried penis often leads to physical and psychological problems. Boys and men may be unable to urinate while standing, or even sitting, and may soil the skin of the scrotum or thighs or clothes. Infections in the urinary tract and the genital area are common due to constant moist skin. In uncircumcised men, the skin covering the head of the penis may become inflamed. Men may be unable to get an erection. If they do get an erection, it may be painful and/or may not be able to penetrate a vagina. It may lead to psychological problems in boys and males such as low self-esteem and depression [4,5].

Medical treatment of buried penis consists of drugs to treat infections if any, reducing the weight and psychological counselling. Surgical treatment consists of Removing scar tissue. Detaching the ligament that attaches the base of the penis to the pubic bone, Suction lipectomy, Abdominoplasty and using Skin grafts to cover areas of the penis where skin coverage is lacking [6,7].

Conclusion

Early recognition of buried penis is definitely key to urgent treatment, as is the awareness of reconstructive service provision. These patients are often advised to lose their weight and see the effect of shrinkage of overlying skin and fat. If these measures do not accomplish the goal or psychological issues takeover then early reconstruction is recommended.

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