Dear Alice,

I have what appears to be scar tissue in the form of a straight line all the way down my penis, over my testicles and ends after that. Is this unusual for a guy? I am circumcised. Is this scar tissue from that or some strange webbing from birth?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Although it may "seam" unusual to you, trust that you aren't alone! What you’re describing sounds like a thin line that extends from the frenulum, which is an elastic band of tissue that connects the head of the penis to the foreskin, and down the midline of the scrotum. This linear “seam” is known as the raphe, and the type of raphe it's called is based on its location (e.g., penile raphe, scrotal raphe). It generally forms in the womb at about ten to fifteen weeks gestation when two symmetrical sides were brought together and a seam formed. The penile raphe is common part of the genitalia, and it can vary in shape, color, and size depending on the individual.

Circumcision scars, on the other hand, tend to look more like a circular marking on the midsection of the shaft. However, just like other incisions, scars can form where the cuts were made. People who were circumcised as infants are more likely to have a circular scar due to methods frequently used on babies. If you were circumcised as an adult, many different methods are used, so if they cut into the shaft of the penis during circumcision, it's possible that scarring occurred. That being said, circumcision can occasionally cause keloid formation during healing, which can reduce sensation, cause pain, or be aesthetically unsatisfactory for the person. These sorts of scars can be removed surgically, if necessary.

Genitalia comes in many variations and look different for different people. If you find yourself worrying about the appearance of your penis often, or notice that it severely affects your self-esteem, it might be worthwhile to get reassurance from a medical professional or chat with a mental health professional.

Alice!
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