

What is Female Genital Mutilation?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

The practice is mostly carried out by traditional circumcisers, who often play other central roles in communities, such as attending childbirths.

FGM is recognised internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture, cruelty, inhumane or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.

Key Facts

- **Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.**
- **The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women.**
- **Procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, infections, as well as complications in childbirth and increased risk of newborn deaths.**
- **FGM is mostly carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15 but women may still undergo FGM.**
- **FGM is a violation of the human rights of girls and women.**
- **FGM is not a religious practice.**

Female genital mutilation is classified into 4 major types

Type 1:

Often referred to as clitoridectomy, this is the partial or total removal of the clitoris, and in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).

Type 2:

Often referred to as excision, this is the partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without excision of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).

Type 3:

Often referred to as infibulation, this is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without a clitoridectomy.

Type 4:

This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

Be vigilant for signs and indicators

A girl at immediate risk of FGM may not know what's going to happen. But she might talk about or you may become aware of:

- a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family especially to a country where FGM is prevalent
- relative or "cutter" visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- female relative being cut – a sister, cousin, or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt

No health benefits, only harm

FGM has no health benefits, and it harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue, and interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. Generally speaking, risks increase with increasing severity of the procedure.

Indicators FGM may have taken place

A girl or woman who has had female genital mutilation (FGM) may:

- have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- have unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear

Immediate complications can include

Where a child or young person discloses fear of FGM, professionals in all agencies should be aware of any immediate complications:

- Severe pain
- Excessive bleeding (haemorrhage)
- Genital tissue swelling
- Fever
- Infections e.g., tetanus
- Urinary problems
- Wound healing problems
- Injury to surrounding genital tissue
- Shock
- Death

Long-term consequences can include:

- Urinary problems
- Vaginal problems
- Menstrual problems
- Scar tissue and keyholes
- Sexual problems
- Increased risk of childbirth complications and newborn deaths
- Need for later surgeries
- Psychological problems

For help and support please contact any of the following:

0800 107 0726

www.saverauk.co.uk

info@saverauk.co.uk

**In an emergency,
please call 999**

   **SaveraUK**

