

University College London Hospitals   
NHS Foundation Trust

the facts about  
**fgm**  
female genital mutilation

produced by University College London Hospitals on behalf of



The term “Female Genital Mutilation” (also called female genital cutting) 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.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION 2008

how healthcare professionals can  
**help**  
women who present with FGM

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**Women's Health Division**

Female genital mutilation evolved in communities that wished to establish control over the sexual behaviour of women.

In some communities, especially in Africa and parts of the Middle East and Asia, FGM is valued as a rite of passage to womanhood (for example in Kenya and Sierra Leone). Others value it as a means of preserving a girl's virginity until marriage (for example in Sudan, Egypt and Somalia). In most of these countries FGM is a pre-requisite to marriage and marriage is vital to a woman's social and economic survival.

While it is not known when or where the practice of FGM originates, a variety of reasons have been given including custom and tradition, protection of virginity and promiscuity, enhanced fertility, hygiene, aesthetic reasons and religious demand. Neither the Bible nor the Koran endorse the practice.

What we do know is that FGM is recognised internationally as a violation of women's human rights. There are no health benefits to FGM. We need to put a stop to the practice of sending British girls from minority ethnic communities abroad for FGM, and we need to support women who are affected by the practice.



It takes a bit of  
**understanding**



# where

FGM is practised

**Africa:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen.

**Also:** Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia

## The law says:

It is an offence to excise, infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of the *labia majora*, *labia minora* or clitoris of another person for non medical reasons, or to aid, abet council or procure any of those acts on that person's own body. It is also illegal to take a child out of the UK for that purpose or to arrange it. The penalty is up to 14 years' imprisonment.

### THE FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION ACT 2003

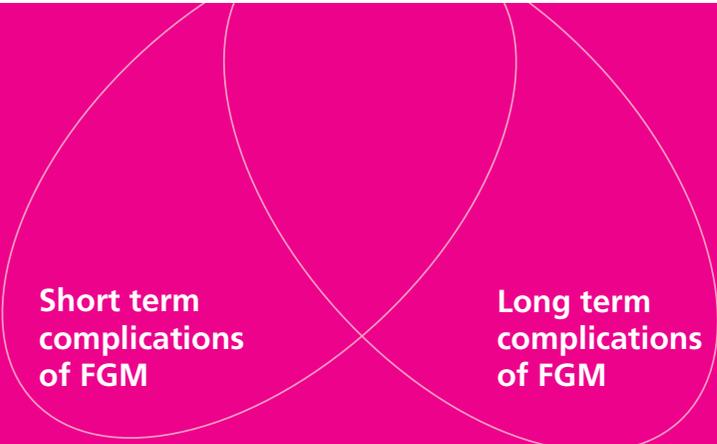
It is the role of midwives and obstetricians to understand the circumstances that can lead to actual and threatened cases of FGM.

This resource will help you to:

- Provide appropriate and sensitive clinical care during pregnancy and delivery.
- Identify and safeguard babies and other children in the family who may be at risk of FGM

FGM is against  
**the law**





### Short term complications of FGM

- Haemorrhage
- Shock
- Acute urinary retention
- Damage to other organs
- Infection
- Failure to heal
- Death

### Long term complications of FGM

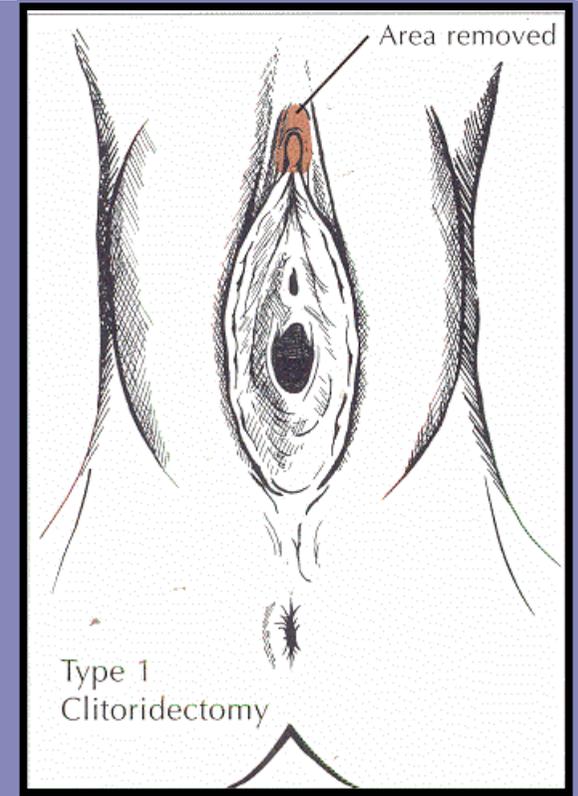
- Difficulty passing urine
- Urinary tract infection
- Difficulties with menstruation
- Chronic pelvic infection
- Infertility
- Vulval abscess/cyst/calculus
- Neuroma
- Keloid scarring
- Fistula
- Increased risk of perineal trauma during delivery, postpartum haemorrhage and perinatal death
- Sexual, psychological and psychosexual difficulties

# the health facts

# fgm type 1

## Clitoridectomy

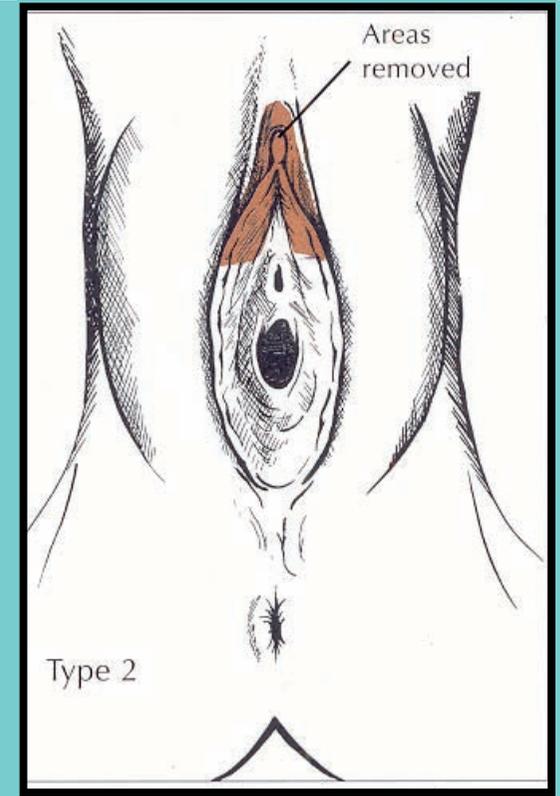
Partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals) and, rarely, the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris) as well.



# fgm type 2

## Excision

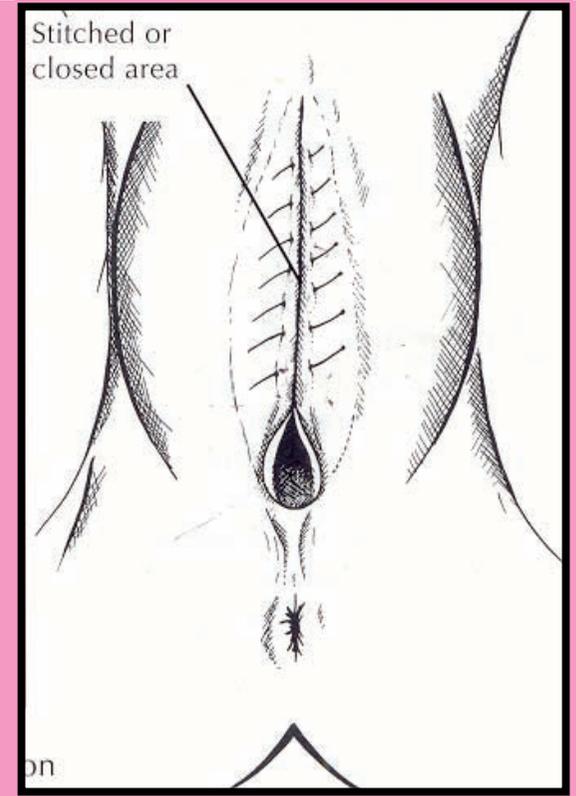
Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the *labia minora*, with or without excision of the *labia majora* (the labia are “the lips” that surround the vagina).



# fgm type 3

## Infibulation

Narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, and sometimes outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris.



# fgm type 4

## Other

All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, eg. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area

### Procedures include:

- “Angurya Cuts” where skin is scraped from around the vagina
- “Gishiri Cuts” where deep posterior cuts are made to the vaginal entrance
- Instillation of caustic substances such as potassium permanganate, bleach and caustic herbs to damage and narrow the vaginal entrance

# more

information

If you are in doubt about matters related to FGM please contact the FGM national clinical group.  
Email: [info@fgmnationalgroup.org](mailto:info@fgmnationalgroup.org)

We are a group of healthcare professionals committed to providing the best care to women who have undergone FGM and to stopping this practice in the UK.

#### **Useful websites**

[www.fgmnationalgroup.org](http://www.fgmnationalgroup.org)

[www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

[www.fgmnetwork.org](http://www.fgmnetwork.org)

[www.forwarduk.org.uk](http://www.forwarduk.org.uk)

[www.equalitynow.org](http://www.equalitynow.org)

[www.dofeve.org](http://www.dofeve.org)