

Key Facts about Female Genital Mutilation from the World Health Organisation

Available from:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

- 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, infertility as well as complications in childbirth increased risk of newborn deaths.
- About 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGM.
- FGM is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15.
- In Africa an estimated 92 million girls 10 years old and above have undergone FGM.
- FGM is a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

Procedures

Female genital mutilation is classified into four major types.

1. Clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals) and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).
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).
3. Infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris.
4. Other: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.

From the Home Office UK

Available from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/female-genital-mutilation/>

The law

The Female Genital Mutilation Act was introduced in 2003 and came into effect in March 2004.

The act:

- makes it illegal to practice FGM in the UK
- makes it illegal to take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in that country
- makes it illegal to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad
- has a penalty of up to 14 years in prison and, or, a fine

Where do I get help if I am worried that a woman or girl (including myself) may be at risk of Female Genital Mutilation?

If you suspect that anyone may be at risk of FGM, either in this country or abroad, or that it has been carried out then it is important that you report these concerns to one of the following:

- Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT): 0117 945 4320
- The NSPCC: 0800 800 5000
- NSPCC Asian Languages Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (free from a landline)
- FORWARD: 020 8960 4000
- Childline: 0800 1111

Bristol Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) can also be contacted:

- East / Central Bristol - 0117 903 6500
- North Bristol - 0117 903 8769
- South - Broadwalk (Knowle) - 0117 903 1414
- South - Symes House (Hartcliffe) - 0117 353 2200

(If the any of these four CYPS offices are closed please ring this number: 01454 615165).

If you think a girl or woman is in immediate danger, please call the Police emergency number: 999.

Where can I get medical/ psychological help with the complications caused by FGM?

FGM has no health benefits for girls and women and procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth. It may also cause emotional problems. Women and girls who are experiencing complications from FGM can get medical help either through the doctor's surgery where they are registered or by visiting the African Women's Clinic at Charlotte Keel Health Centre (in Easton) which is held once a month. The clinic offer advice and assistance on complications caused by FGM, and referral to St Michael's Hospital for "opening" surgery (for women who are NOT pregnant).

Medical advice and treatment is confidential and will not put you or your family at risk of prosecution.

If you have experienced FGM it is not your fault and there are local and national services that can provide support.

- The Greenhouse (Bristol) provides counselling for girls and women who have had FGM: 0117 935 1707.
- FORWARD: 020 8960 4000
- Childline: 0800 1111
- Daughters of Eve: <http://www.dofeve.org/> (options to e-mail or text)

