

FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING

The terms female genital cutting (FGC), female circumcision, and female genital mutilation (FGM) all describe the cultural practice of partially or totally removing the external female genitalia. It is estimated that between 100 million and 140 million girls and women worldwide have received FGC.

- FGC is performed on infants, girls, and women of all ages. Most often, FGC happens before a girl reaches puberty.
- The minor form of FGC is when the clitoris is removed. The most severe form of FGC is when all external genitalia are removed and the vaginal opening is stitched nearly closed. Only a small opening is left for urine and menstrual blood.
- FGC is most often performed across central Africa, in the southern Sahara desert, and in parts of the Middle East. Most women who have experienced FGC live in one of the 28 countries in Africa and the Middle East where FGC is practiced. To a lesser degree, FGC is practiced in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and India. Some immigrants practice various forms of FGC in other parts of the world, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and in European nations.
- FGC can cause a range of health problems, including: bleeding, infection, pain, problems going to the bathroom, problems with sex, problems getting pregnant, problems during pregnancy and delivery, increased risk of HIV infection, and psychological and emotional stress.
- FGC is not supported by any religion and is condemned by many religious leaders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

African Women's Health Center

Phone: (617) 732-5500

Internet Address: <http://www.brighamandwomens.org/africanwomenscenter>

Center for Reproductive Rights

Phone: (917) 637-3600

Internet Address: <http://reproductiverights.org/>

Population Reference Bureau

Phone: (202) 483-1100; Toll-Free: (800) 877-9881

Internet Address: <http://www.prb.org>

World Health Organization

Phone: Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland: + 41 22 791 21 11

Internet Address: <http://www.who.int>

UNICEF

Phone: (800) 4-UNICEF (486-4233)

Internet Address: <http://www.unicef.org>

U.S. Agency for International Development

Phone: (202) 712-0000; (202) 712-4810

Internet Address: <http://www.usaid.gov>

To obtain a list of published and unpublished literature on FGC, contact:

The Population Information Program of the Johns Hopkins Center for Communications Programs

The FGM Resource Group, POPLINE

111 Market Place, Suite 310

Baltimore, MD 21202-4012

Phone: (410) 659-6300

Internet Address: <http://www.jhuccp.org>

For an in-depth look at female genital cutting, visit [womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) at <http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/female-genital-cutting.cfm>.



womenshealth.gov

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