

## 7. Where can I find out more?

[FGM Aware](#)

[Unicef What is female genital mutilation?](#)

[National FGM Centre](#)

## 6. What should I do if I suspect FGM?

If you suspect FGM has or may occur to a child (a person under 18), you should make an immediate Child Protection referral which should trigger an Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD).

The Protection Plan should take into account that other female siblings or close relatives may also be at risk. Survivors of FGM should be given the opportunity to speak with female practitioners.

Call **999** if there is an immediate safety concern or acute health need such as bleeding, acute pain, fever or similar.

You can also call the free NSPCC FGM helpline to report concerns anonymously on **0800 028 3550** (8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday).

Email: [fgm.help@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:fgm.help@NSPCC.org.uk)

## 5. What should I look out for?

- If the girl discusses a special occasion/ceremony to 'become a woman'.
- If a girl mentions that someone did something to them that they are not allowed to talk about.
- Unexpected absence from school when the girl is from a practicing community.
- Change in behaviour following absence from school.
- Relative visiting from abroad from a practicing community.
- If a girl spends longer in the bathroom and avoids exercise.
- Recurrent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems.
- Travel vaccine request for country prevalent for FGM.
- Difficulty walking, standing or sitting.
- Reluctance to undergo routine medical examinations.
- Complaints of pain between legs.

## 1. What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a harmful practice which involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or injury to female genital organs without any medical reason. FGM is believed to be a way of ensuring virginity and chastity and may not be perceived as harmful by those arranging it.

FGM is a practice that takes place in at least 28 countries, in Africa, parts of the Middle and Far East and Western Europe. The procedure may be carried out soon after birth, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy.

## 2. Is FGM legal?

FGM is illegal in the UK and can result in 14 years' imprisonment, or a fine, or both. It is an offence for someone to perform FGM or assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself, both in the UK or abroad.

In Scotland, FGM is illegal under the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005.

## 3. What is the impact of FGM?

FGM has no health benefits and is harmful to girls and women. It is child abuse and is an extreme form of gender-based abuse.

Some women may not experience any health difficulties whilst others may have immediate and life-long physical and psychological consequences.

Women may not link recurring or chronic health problems to FGM and may instead view conditions as part of the natural condition of being female and/or ageing.

## 4. Who is at risk of FGM?

Indicators that a girl or young woman is potentially at risk of FGM are:

- One or both parents come from an ethnic group that traditionally practices FGM.
- The mother has had FGM.
- An older sister or female cousins have undergone FGM.
- The mother (and/or father) has requested re-infibulation (narrowing of vaginal opening) following childbirth.
- The girl is withdrawn from all teaching classes on personal, social or health education.
- It is thought that communities less integrated into British society are more likely to continue the practice.

