

Long-term complications of female circumcision include:

- Scarring and hardening of the tissue
- Difficulty with urinating and passing of menstrual blood
- Decrease or loss of sexual sensation
- Painful intercourse
- Difficult and painful childbirth

Is female genital cutting illegal?

Yes, in some countries, including the United States, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Australia, although it continues.

How is female genital cutting done?

Traditionally, a young girl is held down by one or more family members, while the midwife uses a sharp tool, such as a knife, broken piece of glass, or a specific cutting tool to excise the foreskin of the clitoris or the labia. Oftentimes, these tools are not clean, resulting in infections and the spread of viruses.

Many parents, afraid of these types of conditions and complications, have been taking their girls to hospitals where the circumcision is performed in sanitary conditions under anesthesia. This may result in more damage due to excessive removal of tissue.

Parents have new concerns

More and more parents are questioning the wisdom of subjecting their baby girls to the pain and risks of genital cutting, with its lifelong consequences. There are education campaigns in Africa and the Middle East being carried out to warn people of the dangers of genital cutting. Midwives are now putting down their knives in order to educate their communities about the dangers of cutting, and girls are being initiated into womanhood without any bloodletting. These campaigns are driven by the people who have been affected the most, the women and girls. They have taken it upon themselves to preserve the bodily integrity of future generations.

Circumcision is a brutal ritual rooted in superstition and should be abandoned... What is called for is a well thought out approach to the eradication of antiquated beliefs and practices which cause so much needless suffering, mutilation, tragedy, and death."

- Ashley Montagu

More information can be found at: NOCIRC and FGM Education and Networking Project.

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NOCIRC pamphlets: Nine different pamphlets: 50¢ each or \$25/100 (same or mixed) plus \$5 S/H.

The **NOCIRC Resource Guide** lists the pamphlets, books, articles, newsletters and videos available from NOCIRC, and other resources as well. Free for SASE.

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The information in this pamphlet is not meant to replace the care and advice of your pediatrician.

Answers To Your Questions About Female Circumcision

from the

**National Organization
of Circumcision Information
Resource Centers**

*Educating a New Generation
For the Well-Being of All Children*

www.nocirc.org

What is female circumcision?

Female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation (FGM) and female genital cutting (FGC), comprises any procedure that involves partial or complete removal of any part of a female's genitalia.

What are the different types of cutting?

According to the World Health Organization, there are four types of cutting:

Type I: This type includes the excision of the prepuce with or without the excision of parts or all of the clitoris.

Type II: Excision of the clitoris together with parts or all of the labia minora.

Type III: Excision or ablation of the external genitalia, accompanied sometimes with stitching or narrowing of the vaginal opening.

Type IV: Any procedure that affects the genitalia, including piercing, pricking, and/or stretching of the clitoris or surrounding areas.

Female Genitalia

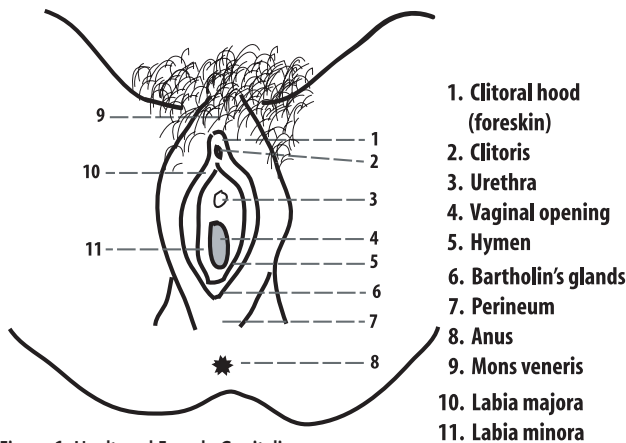


Figure 1. Unaltered Female Genitalia

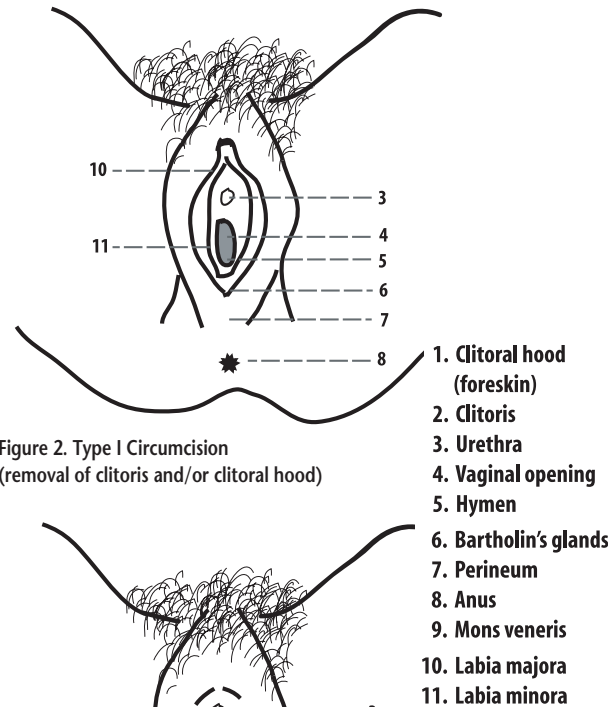


Figure 2. Type I Circumcision
(removal of clitoris and/or clitoral hood)

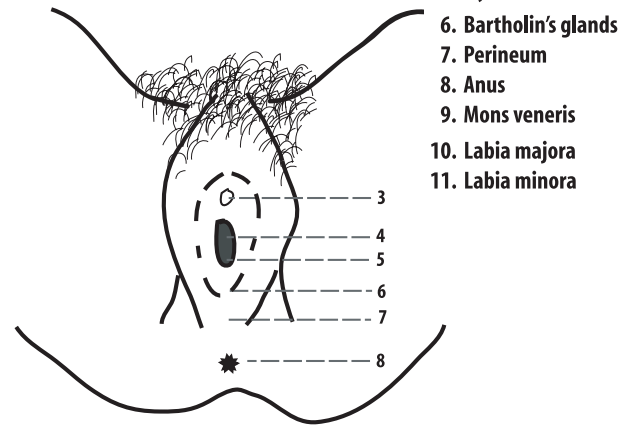


Figure 3. Type II Circumcision
(removal of clitoris and labia minora and majora)

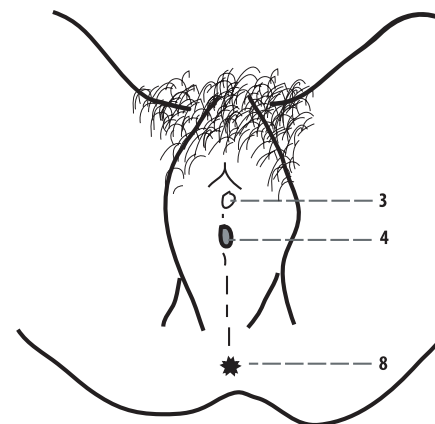


Figure 4. Type III Circumcision
(removal of clitoris, labia minora and majora, and stitching vaginal opening)

Why is female genital cutting practiced?

Family honor, cleanliness, protection against spells, insurance of virginity and faithfulness to the husband, or simply terrorizing women out of sex are used as reasons for the practice of FGC. Additionally, in many cultures, a girl who is not circumcised is considered "unclean" and, therefore, unmarriageable. Girls often undergo this rite as part of an initiation into womanhood.

Is female genital cutting an Islamic practice?

Even though FGC is practiced in mostly Islamic countries, it is not an Islamic practice. FGC is a cross-cultural and cross-religious ritual. In Africa and the Middle East, it is performed by Muslims, Coptic Christians, members of various indigenous groups, Protestants, and Catholics, to name a few.

Where is female genital cutting practiced?

Type I is widely spread in areas from Malaysia and Indonesia in Asia to Saudi Arabia and Yemen in the Middle East. Type II is mostly practiced in Sub-Saharan Africa, while Type III is practiced mostly in the Sudan, parts of Egypt, Somalia, Mali, and parts of Nigeria.

Does female genital cutting have risks?

Yes. Like any other surgery, female genital cutting has risks. They include:

- Hemorrhage
- Surgical mishap
- Shock from pain and bleeding
- Infection and failure of the wound to heal
- Injury or trauma to adjoining areas, such as the urethra and anus
- Possible transmission of HIV/AIDS and other viruses
- Death