

## WHAT IS FGM?

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** 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. FGM is commonly believed to be a way of ensuring virginity and chastity, and may be carried out shortly after birth, during childhood/ adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy. **FGM is a form of both child abuse and gender-based violence, and is against the law.**

## CLINICAL SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Recurring urine infection, urine retention or incontinence
- Uterine, vaginal and pelvic infections
- Visual signs of partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs or adjacent tissues
- Sexual dysfunction
- Complications in childbirth
- Psychosexual problems
- Depression

## INDICATORS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN HEALTH SETTINGS

- Reluctance to undergo vaginal medical examinations
- Trauma and flashbacks
- Re-infibulation requested following childbirth
- Mother or older sibling has undergone FGM
- A girl talks about plans to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion/celebration to 'become a woman'

**FGM Safeguarding and Risk Assessment: Quick guide for health professionals** provides further information about FGM, its health implications, information on how to approach a discussion, and local terms.

## THE LAW

Under the **Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003** and **Serious Crime Act 2015**, FGM is illegal. It is an offence to carry out and/or assist in FGM in this country or abroad, or to fail to protect a girl from FGM. Lifelong anonymity is provided to victims, and **FGM protection orders** can be issued to protect a girl from FGM.

## MANDATORY REPORTING DUTY WHEN FGM HAS OCCURRED IN GIRLS UNDER 18

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Mandatory reporting duty** requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers to report if, as part of their work, they have observed physical signs of FGM having occurred in a child, or if a child has disclosed that they have had FGM. They must report directly to the Police via 101, and record when FGM is disclosed or identified as part of NHS healthcare. This is a personal duty and cannot be transferred. Non-regulated staff must discuss concerns with an appropriate professional.

**Mandatory reporting is only one part of safeguarding against FGM and other abuse. Always ask your local safeguarding lead if you have concerns. [The FGM Safeguarding Pathway](#) offers clear guidance on when and how to report.**

## REQUIRED RECORDING WHEN FGM HAS OCCURRED

A mandatory recording requirement is in place for Acute Trusts, GPs and Mental Health Trusts to submit information, via the Health & Social Care Information Centre to the **Female Genital Mutilation Enhanced Dataset**. Your organisation should make clear how you include this information in your clinic notes/record system.

## RECORDING THAT A GIRL UNDER 18 HAS A FAMILY HISTORY OF FGM

**Female Genital Mutilation - Information Sharing (FGM-IS)** is a national IT system that allows healthcare professionals to view, add and remove an FGM indicator to the NHS Spine, to support early intervention and ongoing safeguarding of girls under 18 who have a family history of FGM. See these **FGM-IS videos** for more information.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN

**If you believe that a victim or potential victim of FGM is in immediate danger, always dial 999.**

If you're worried about a child or woman but they are not in immediate danger, you must share your concerns via your safeguarding processes.

## WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

The Government's **Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation** provides information and strategic guidance on FGM, and advice and support for frontline professionals.

**Female Genital Mutilation: Standards for training healthcare professionals** is a structured curriculum for staff at all levels

The Home Office has created this **Female Genital Mutilation Resource Pack**. It includes a useful section on safeguarding, as well as links to more information.

**Services for Girls and Women** are available via the NHS. National FGM Clinics can be accessed by anyone in England, and women can self-refer.



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