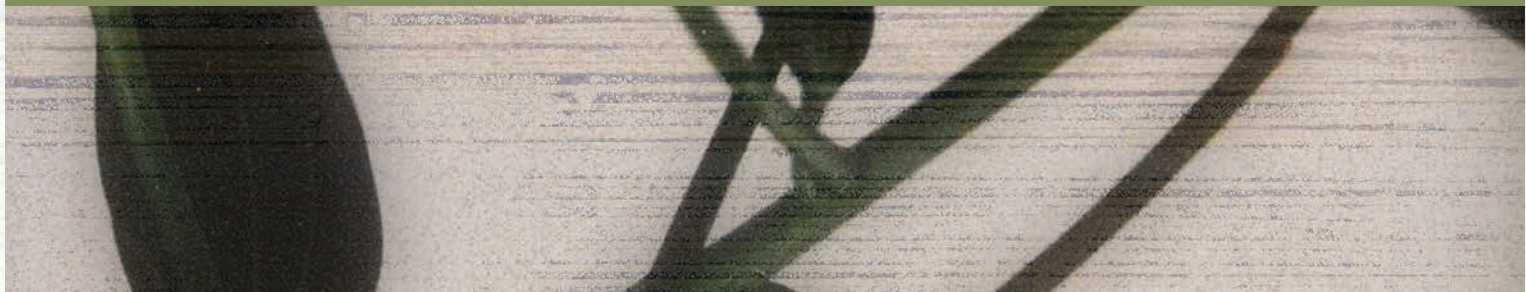




# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION AND NEW ZEALAND



## FGM is a traditional practice affecting over 200 million women and girls worldwide and is supported by a wide range of cultural and social beliefs.

In Aotearoa New Zealand FGM is not a traditional practice, however there are women and children here from countries that practise FGM, and services are available to provide health assistance for women affected. FGM is against the law here because it is believed to be harmful to the health of women and girls, and there are community-led initiatives underway to help prevent FGM occurring.

### What is female genital mutilation?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is defined as “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” (WHO).

**There are many types and variations of FGM, and the four main ones are as follows:**

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#### Type 1 Clitoridectomy

Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the hood of the clitoris.

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#### Type 3 Infibulation

Narrowing of the vaginal opening and creating a covering seal by cutting and repositioning the inner and/or outer labia. This may or may not involve removal of the clitoris and the labia minora.

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#### Type 2 Excision

Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora. This type can occur with or without the removal of the labia majora.

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#### Type 4 Other

All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia including pricking, piercing, stretching or incising of the clitoris and/or labia; and/or cauterization, scraping, cutting or introduction of substances into the vagina.

### What are the effects of FGM?

**The health complications of FGM vary depending on the type of FGM, but can include:**

**Short and long term** – haemorrhage, shock, pain, difficulty passing urine and urinary infections, injury to genital tissue and the urethra, infection, death, difficulty with menstruation, vulval abscesses and calculus formation, keloid scars, dermoid cysts and neurinoma.

**Sexual** – fear, pain and difficulty associated with sex, decreased sexual pleasure, vaginismus, sexual trauma and frigidity.

**Childbirth** – difficulty with examinations and procedures during pregnancy and birth, prolonged labour, haemorrhage, retained fetus in the event of miscarriage, obstructed delivery, birth asphyxia and death of the baby.

**Psychosocial** – fear, loss of trust, betrayal, anxiety, fear of being circumcised, PTSD, and sexual dysfunction.

## Is FGM a religious requirement?

FGM is practised by followers of many different religions: Muslims, Catholics, animists and Christians. Some Muslim communities believe FGM is a religious requirement, however most Islamic countries do not practise FGM and there is no agreed evidence in the Qu'ran (or any other religious texts) that FGM is a religious requirement. There is also no authentic reference to FGM in the Sunnah, the sayings or traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). One of the basic principles of Islam comes from the Prophet (PBUH) when he said: "Do not harm yourself or others." Key messages from international Islamic scholars on FGM include:

- There is no single verse in the Qu'ran supporting FGM, however there are several verses that condemn acts like FGM that negatively affect the human body and interfere with Allah's creation.
- FGM conflicts with Islamic teachings on the sanctity of the human body and the Islamic belief that no one has the right to mutilate or cause pain or harm to a human body.
- FGM, even in its mildest form, can be harmful because it interferes with the normal healthy function, purpose and structure of the female genitalia, which Allah strongly condemns.
- FGM adversely affects the health and wellbeing of the girls and women throughout their lives and is an infringement of their rights.

## What does the NZ law say about FGM in NZ?

FGM is illegal in New Zealand because it is harmful to the health of women and girls. New Zealand is also a signatory to international conventions that recognize FGM as a violation of the human rights of girls.

All types of FGM are illegal in NZ under an amendment to The Crimes Act (section 204A), even if a woman or girl wants it to be done. The law states it is illegal to remove or damage healthy and normal female genital tissue for any cultural, religious or non-medical reason, which means it is against the law to:

- circumcise a woman, girl or female baby
- remove or cut out any part of the female genital area
- stitch up the female genital area
- cut the clitoris or part of the clitoris
- prick, pierce, incise, scrape, or cauterise any part of the female genital area
- damage the female genital area in other ways

It is also against the law to send or arrange for a child or any other NZ citizen to go overseas for FGM to be performed, or assist or encourage someone to perform FGM outside of New Zealand. If someone performs FGM, the penalty is imprisonment for up to seven years. This occurs whether the person performs the procedure, helps, or gets someone else to perform FGM.

## What assistance is available for girls and women with FGM?

New Zealand health professionals can offer confidential, sensitive and skilled FGM sexual and reproductive health care for any girls or women experiencing FGM related complications.

Contact [hello@fgm.co.nz](mailto:hello@fgm.co.nz) to find healthcare professionals in your area that can help.

If you would like support for FGM,  
are concerned it may occur, or want  
more information please contact:

The FGM Education Programme

Email: [hello@fgm.co.nz](mailto:hello@fgm.co.nz)

[www.fgm.co.nz](http://www.fgm.co.nz)