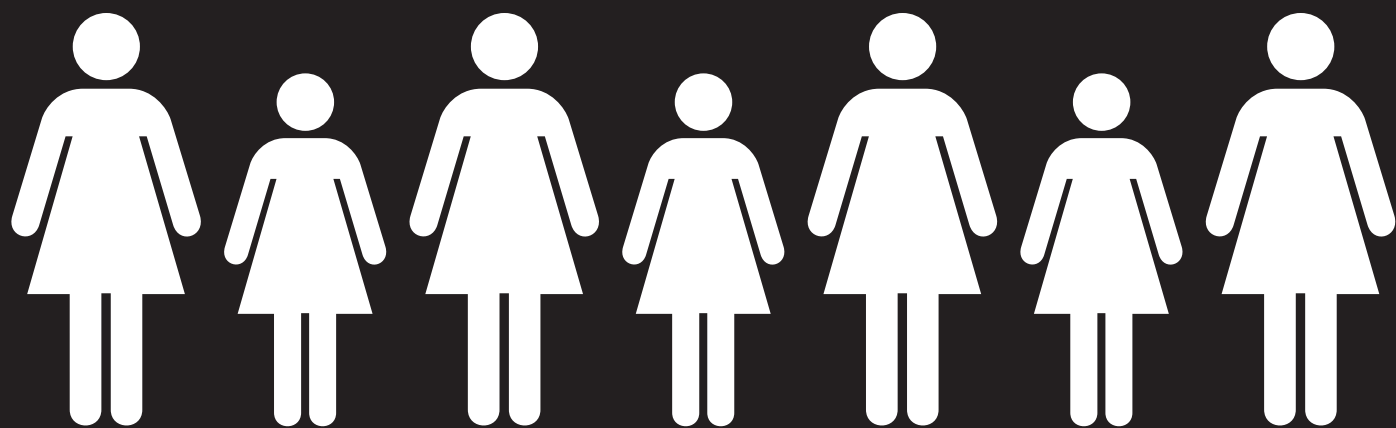


Female Genital Mutilation



Pocket guide for health care professionals

What is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)?

FGM comprises of all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genital organs or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is most often carried out on young girls aged between infancy and 15 years old. It is often referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision', 'initiation', 'Sunna' and 'infibulation'.

INITIATION infibulation
female circumcision
CUTTING sunna

FGM in the UK

It is estimated that 65,000 girls aged 13 and under are at risk of FGM in the UK.

UK communities most at risk include Kenyan, Somalian, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean. Non-African countries that practise FGM include Yemen, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, Thailand (South) and Pakistan. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

In Practice what you should consider:-

- Is it going to occur?
- Has it occurred?

Immediate effects of FGM can include:

- Severe pain
- Shock
- Bleeding
- Wound infections, including tetanus and gangrene, as well as blood-borne viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C
- Inability to urinate
- Injury to vulval tissues surrounding the entrance to the vagina
- Damage to other organs nearby, such as the urethra and the bowel
- FGM can sometimes result in death

DEATH - SEVERE PAIN - BLEEDING - SHOCK - WOUND INFECTIONS - GANGRENE - BLOOD-BORNE VIRUSES - HEPATITIS B/C - HIV - INABILITY TO URINATE

Long-term consequences of FGM can include:

- Chronic vaginal and pelvic infections
- Abnormal periods
- Difficulties passing urine and persistent urine infections
- Kidney impairment and possible kidney failure
- Damage to the reproductive system, including infertility
- Cysts and the formation of scar tissue
- Complications in pregnancy and newborn deaths
- Pain during sex and lack of pleasurable sensation
- Psychological damage, including low libido, depression and anxiety
- Flashbacks during pregnancy and childbirth
- The need for later surgery to open the lower vagina for sexual intercourse and childbirth

Psychological and mental health problems as a result of FGM

Case histories and personal accounts taken from women indicate that FGM can be an extremely traumatic experience for girls and women, which can stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Young women receiving psychological counselling in the UK for their experiences of FGM, report feelings of betrayal by parents, regret and anger.

Anger
Regret
Betrayal

A black silhouette of a woman standing, positioned to the right of the text. The silhouette is simple, with a circular head, a rectangular body, and a skirt-like bottom section. It is placed next to the words 'Anger', 'Regret', and 'Betrayal', which are arranged in a descending staircase pattern from top-left to bottom-right.

Spotting the signs - girls

Suspicious may arise in a number of ways that a girl may be at risk of FGM. These include:-

- Knowing that a mother or older sister has undergone FGM
- A girl talks about plans to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion/celebration to 'become a woman'
- A girl's parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period, or school holidays or when attending for travel vaccinations.
- A girl may talk about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is present.
- The girl is a member of the community that is less integrated into UK society and whose country of origin practices FGM.

Signs that a girl may have already undergone FGM:-

- Difficulty walking, sitting or standing
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating
- Soreness, infection or unusual presentation noticed by practitioner when changing a nappy or helping with toileting
- Spending long periods of time away from the classroom during the day with bladder or menstrual problems
- Having frequent unusual menstrual problems
- Prolonged or repeated absence from school or college
- A prolonged absence from school or college with personal or behaviour changes e.g. withdrawn, depressed.
- Being particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- Asking for help or advice but not being explicit about the procedure due to embarrassment or fear

FGM is child abuse

FGM causes significant harm and constitutes physical and emotional abuse. FGM is a violation of a girl's right to life, their bodily integrity as well as their right to health.

Parents and families may believe that arranging Female Genital Mutilation is the right thing to do for girls, but FGM harms girls and women, has no benefits, and is not supported by any religion.

The Law in Scotland

It is against the law to carry out FGM in Scotland or take a girl abroad for FGM. It is also a crime to assist or arrange FGM of another person, even if the FGM occurs outside Scotland.

A person convicted of an offence under the Scotland FGM Act 2005 is liable to imprisonment for up to 14 years.

What to do if you are concerned or have been made aware FGM has occurred

For a girl, staff should follow Child Protection Procedures. This will depend on immediate risk of FGM occurring or if it has already occurred. Staff can gain advice from Child Protection Advisors. See the FGM protocol on the NHS Intranet.

Always inform the individual's GP of discussions and record appropriately.

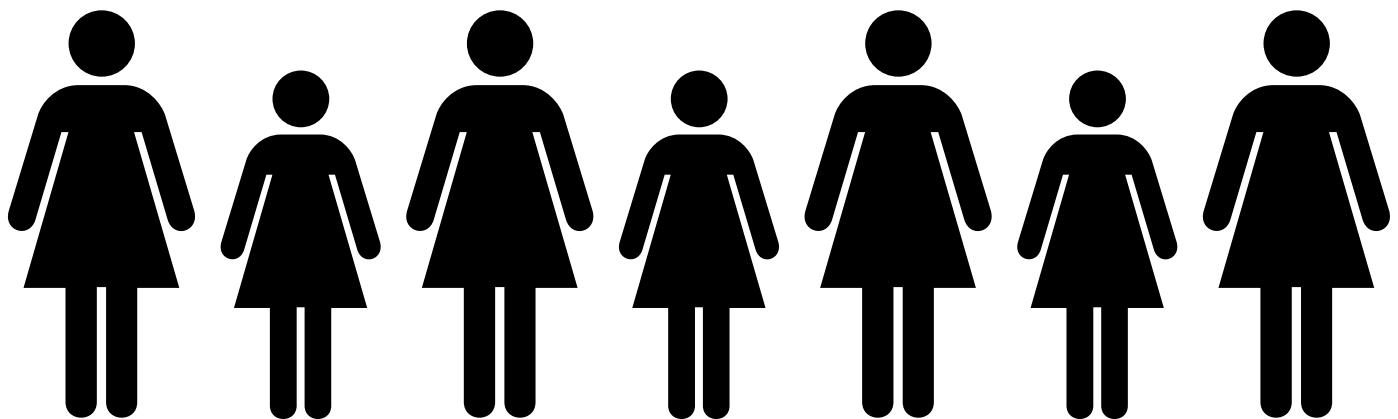
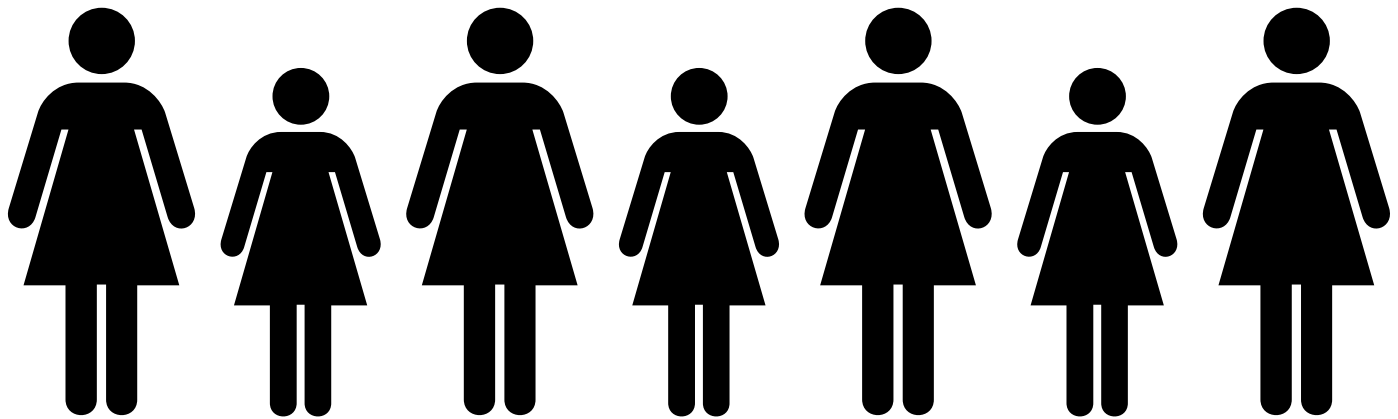
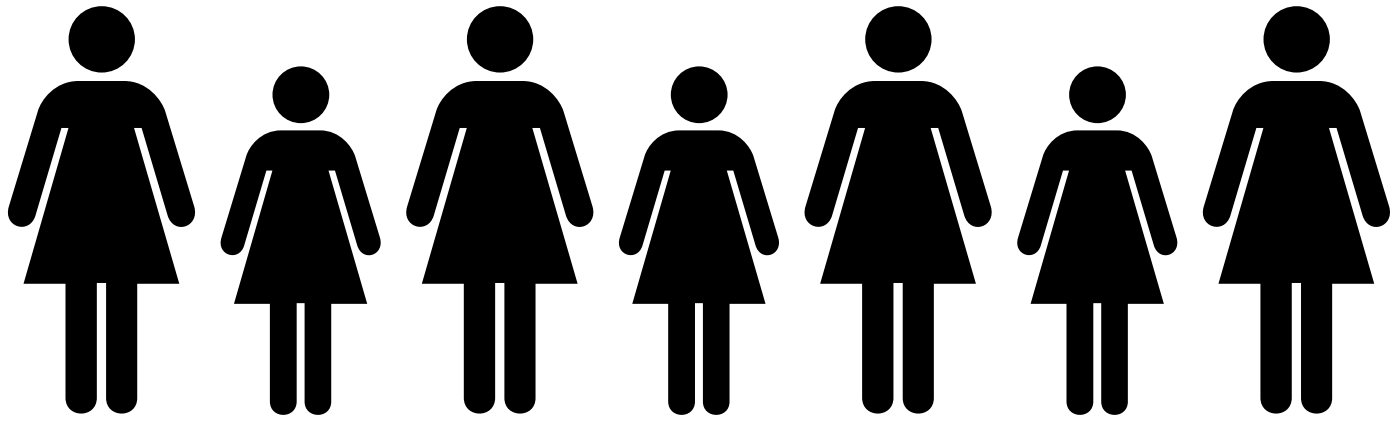
Recording

Health Professionals should inform the girl or woman's GP of discussions and any treatment for recording in her notes. GPs will use Read codes and have a responsibility to identify if there may be other female children or young women who may be at risk of FGM. Support can be offered by the Child Protection Advisors.

Further information:-

FGM Aware website
www.fgmaware.org

For further information on our approach to FGM in Highland, see the FGM protocol on NHS Highland's intranet, or contact the Violence Against Women Partnership on 01463 704724 or alternatively send an email to gillian.gunn@nhs.net



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