



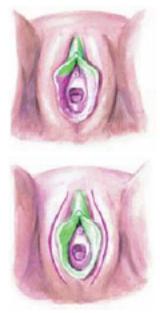
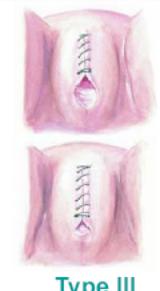
## WHAT IS FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)?

FGM (also known as female circumcision/genital cutting) is a practice that includes 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons' (WHO 2008, p.4).

FGM is the term used by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to signify the gravity of the practice (WHO 2008). However, health professionals may use the term 'female circumcision' with women to avoid offending the communities they work with (RWH 2008).

Muslims and Christians practice FGM in north, east and western Africa, parts of Asia and the Middle East, as well as immigrant communities in North America and Europe (WHO 2008). FGM is becoming more relevant in Australia, due to the increasing immigration and settlement of FGM affected communities.

FGM is practised for many reasons including: aesthetics, religious observance and cultural identity (WHO 2008). There are four types of FGM. Each type holds a different meaning/significance for practising communities, and has different implications for women's physical, sexual and psychosocial wellbeing.

FGM Type	WHO typology 1995	WHO modified typology 2007	Diagram of affected areas
<b>TYPE I</b>	Excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or the entire clitoris	Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or prepuce (clitoridectomy) prepuce only  <b>Type Ia:</b> removal of the clitoral hood or the prepuce only  <b>Type Ib:</b> removal of the clitoris with the prepuce	 <b>Type I</b>
<b>TYPE II</b>	Excision of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora	Partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision).  <b>Type IIa:</b> removal of the labia minora only  <b>Type IIb:</b> partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora  <b>Type IIc:</b> partial or total removal of the clitoris, the labia minora and the labia majora	 <b>Type II</b>
<b>TYPE III</b>	Excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation)	Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and appositioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation)  <b>Type IIIa:</b> removal and apposition of the labia minora  <b>Type IIIb:</b> removal and apposition of the labia majora	 <b>Type III</b>
<b>TYPE IV</b>	<b>Unclassified. Includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pricking, piercing or incising the clitoris and/or labia</li> <li>Stretching of the clitoris and/or labia</li> <li>Cauterization by burning of the clitoris and surrounding tissue</li> <li>Scraping of tissue surrounding the vaginal orifice (angurya cuts)</li> <li>Cutting of the vagina (gishiri cuts)</li> <li>Introduction of corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina to cause bleeding or for the purpose of tightening or narrowing it</li> <li>Any other procedure that falls under the broad definition of female genital mutilation</li> </ul>	Unclassified. Includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, for example, pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization.	

Comparison between the WHO 1995 typology and the 2007 modified typology of FGM (adapted from WHO 2008 p. 24; Braddy & Files 2007, p.159)

The Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) aims to improve access to mainstream health care services by women from cultures in which Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is sometimes practiced.

For more information about FARREP at Women's Health West, call 9689 9588 or visit <http://www.whwest.org.au/community/african.php>



## HEALTH COMPLICATIONS OF FGM

There are no known health benefits associated with FGM (WHO 2008). FGM can have short term and long term effects on health including:

### Short term

Severe pain, excessive bleeding, shock, psychological trauma, infection, urinary retention and death

(RWH 2008; WHO 2008).

### Long term

Reproductive tract infections, excessive scarring, complications during pregnancy and childbirth, infertility, painful periods, psychological issues, difficulty in undergoing medical examination and pelvic pain

(RWH 2008; WHO 2008)

## LEGAL STATUS OF FGM IN VICTORIA

FGM is addressed in the legislation of each State/Territory in Australia. In Victoria, FGM falls under the Crimes (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 1996 and the Children, Youth and Families Act (2005). Below is a summary of each act.

Act	Summary of Act
<b>Crimes (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 1996</b>	It is illegal to perform FGM procedures on a child or adult.
	It is illegal to take a person (child) from Victoria to have FGM procedures performed
<b>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</b>	<i>s162 (c)</i> the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.
	<i>s162 (e)</i> the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.
	<i>s182.</i> Professionals such as education staff, police, medical and nursing staff are mandated to report FGM to Child Protection, if they form a 'belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection' (adapted from RWH 2008)

Table 1 Outline of legislation addressing FGM



## ACCESS TO SERVICES AND RESOURCES

For further information/support on FGM:

**Royal Women's Hospital (FARREP)**

(03) 8345 3058

<http://www.thewomens.org.au/FamilyandReproductiveRightsEducationProgramFARREP>

**Women's Health West (FARREP)**

(03) 9689 9588

<http://www.whwest.org.au/>

## LINKS AND REFERENCES

Department of Human Services, Victorian Government Health Information, <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/vwhp/farrep.htm>

RWH 2008, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) a resource manual for health professionals, Melbourne.

The Crimes (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 1996 (VIC)  
[http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/A7F189B86D600C2DCA256E5B00213B02/\\$FILE/96-046a.pdf](http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/A7F189B86D600C2DCA256E5B00213B02/$FILE/96-046a.pdf)

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)  
[http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/edfb620cf7503d1aca256da4001b08af/15A4CD9FB84C7196CA2570D00022769A/\\$FILE/05-096a.pdf](http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/edfb620cf7503d1aca256da4001b08af/15A4CD9FB84C7196CA2570D00022769A/$FILE/05-096a.pdf)

United Nations Children's Fund  
[http://www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_genitalmutilation.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_genitalmutilation.html)

World Health Organisation (FGM)  
<http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/fgm/>

WHO 2008, Eliminating Female genital mutilation: an interagency statement, [http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/fgm/fgm\\_statement\\_2008.pdf](http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/fgm/fgm_statement_2008.pdf)

