



### TRIGGER WARNING:

This fact sheet includes information about Female Genital Mutilation which some people may find distressing. If this topic feels difficult, you may wish to pause reading or seek support. **Details of support services are included below:**

### Support & How to Report:

- **Guidance:** Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation: procedural information – [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – Gives relevant professionals and the police an understanding of the female genital mutilation (FGM) mandatory reporting duty.
- Report FGM with Avon and Somerset Police: If you feel you are at risk, suffering from the effects of FGM, suspect a child may be at risk, or have any information at all relating to suspected acts of FGM, **we would prefer to speak to you in person at your nearest police station.** If contacting us online is the safest way for you to get in touch, fill in the **report a crime or incident form**. – [www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/)
- If you're concerned that someone may be at risk, contact the NSPCC helpline on 0800 028 3550 or email [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk).
- **Support:** [www.nationalfgmcentre.org.uk](http://www.nationalfgmcentre.org.uk)

### What is FGM?

Female Genital Mutilation, often called FGM, is a harmful practice where parts of a girl's or woman's external genitalia are cut or injured. It is sometimes called female circumcision, but it has no medical benefit and is very different from male circumcision.



### When and why does FGM happen?

FGM is usually carried out on girls when they are young, often between infancy and the teenage years. In some cases, it happens before a girl turns five. The procedure is often done without anaesthesia and by someone who does not have medical training.

FGM is practiced in some communities in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and among migrant communities around the world. It is usually linked to cultural traditions or social pressure. Some people believe it prepares girls for marriage, controls sexual behaviour, or is required by religion. However, FGM is not required by any religion.

**FGM can cause serious health problems.** These can include severe pain, heavy bleeding, infections, difficulty urinating, and problems during childbirth later in life. It can also cause long-term emotional and psychological harm, such as anxiety, depression, or trauma.

There are no health benefits to FGM. Medical and human rights organisations worldwide agree that it is harmful and violates the rights of girls and women.

In many countries, including the UK, USA, Australia, and much of Europe, FGM is **illegal**. It is also illegal to take a child abroad to have FGM performed. Laws are in place to protect girls and to support survivors.



### Signs to look out for:

**There are some warning signs that a girl may be at risk of FGM or may already have experienced it. A girl might talk about a special ceremony or an upcoming trip to another country, especially during school holidays. She may seem anxious, withdrawn, or worried about the future.**

#### 1. Physical Signs

Physical signs can include difficulty walking, sitting, or standing, spending longer than usual in the bathroom, or complaining of pain or discomfort in the genital area. After time away from school, a girl may return with health problems such as infections or ongoing pain.

#### 2. Emotional Signs

Emotional signs can include sudden changes in behaviour, difficulty concentrating, depression, or signs of trauma. It is important to remember that these signs do not always mean FGM has occurred, but they should be taken seriously.

If you are worried about a child, it is important to seek help from appropriate safeguarding professionals, healthcare providers, or local support services. Acting early can help protect a child from harm. FGM is widely recognised as a human rights issue, and ending the practice is an important step toward protecting the health, dignity, and equality of girls and women