

There are support services for women, girls and families across Australia. See below to contact your nearest service provider:

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Female Circumcision

Female circumcision is a traditional cultural practice. It is a deliberate cutting or altering of the external female genital organs. Female circumcision is sometimes referred to as Female Genital Cutting or Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting.

Female circumcision has no health benefit to women and girls and can have an impact on their sexual and reproductive health.

To have control over and protect our own bodies, we all need to be treated with dignity and respect. This is everyone's right as a human being. There is support, advice and information available across all states and territories on female circumcision.

Health Issues

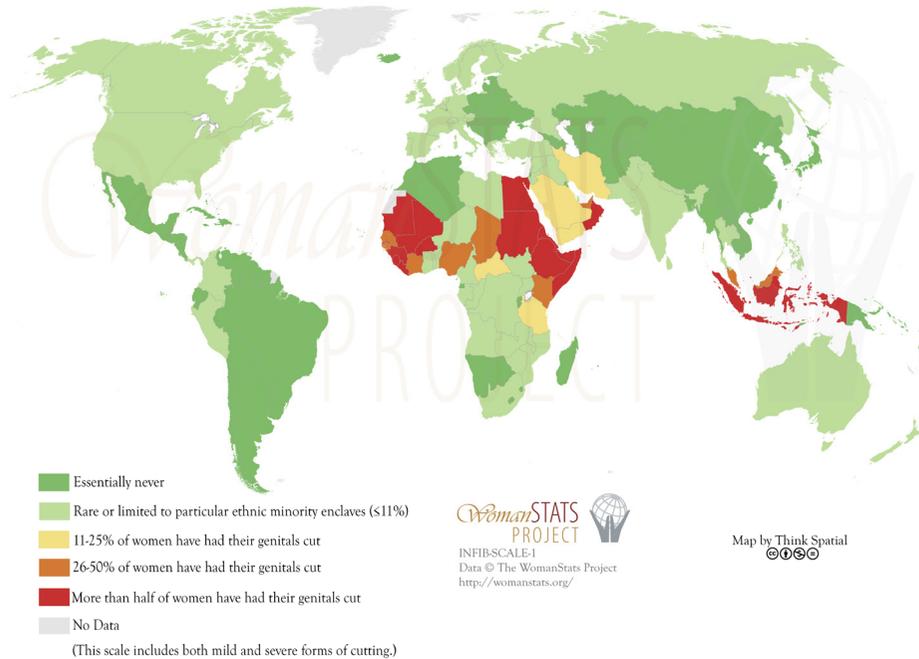
Female Circumcision has short and long term health consequences including:

- Severe pain
- Fever
- Scarring
- Neuroma (a growth or tumour of nerve tissue)
- Bladder and urinary infections
- Pain while urinating
- Pain during periods or intercourse
- Urinary tract infections
- Problems during childbirth, such as perineal tearing due to the tightening of the vagina opening and scarring
- Death

Human Rights

Female Circumcision is recognised internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

Where is Female Circumcision Practised?



An estimated 200 million women and girls around the world have been circumcised. The practice can be found in communities and certain ethnic groups in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America including:

Benin	Ethiopia	Mali	State of Palestine
Burkina Faso	Gambia	Mauritania	and Israel
Cameroon	Ghana	Niger	Sudan
Central African Republic	Guinea	Nigeria	Tanzania
Chad	Guinea-Bissau	Oman	Togo
Colombia	India	Pakistan	Uganda
Cote d'Ivoire	Indonesia	Peru	United Arab Emirates
Democratic Rep of Congo	Iran	Senegal	Yemen
Djibouti	Iraq	Sierra Leone	Zambia
Ecuador	Kenya	Singapore	
Egypt	Liberia	Somalia	
Eritrea	Malaysia	Sri Lanka	

The origin of female circumcision is unknown and has no religious significance. Types of female circumcision vary between communities and ethnic groups. Countries around the world are abandoning the practice and making it illegal. It is important for us to talk about our cultural practices. We love our culture but we can leave behind practices that can cause harm.

Four Types of Female Circumcision

Type 1 or Sunna is the partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive part of the female genitals) or clitoral hood (the fold of the skin surrounding the clitoris).

Type 2 or Sunna is the partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (the inner lips that cover the vulva) with or without removal of the labia majora (the large skin folds that cover the female genital area).

Type 3 or Infibulation (Pharaonic) is the removal of all or part of the labia minora and labia majora, with the stitching of a seal across the vagina, leaving a small opening for the passage of urine and menstrual blood. Type 3 procedure can occur with or without removal of the clitoris.

Type 4 or Sunna includes all other procedures to the female genital area for non-medical reasons including pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, elongating and cauterising the genitals.

It is estimated that Type 3 or Infibulation occurs in 10% of circumcised women around the world. Women who have undergone infibulation can speak to their doctor or hospital for help to open their circumcision. Although type 1, 2 or 4 may not be severe, it can still have an impact on a person's health and wellbeing.

Female Circumcision is illegal in Australia.

It is against the law to:

- Remove or cut any part of the female genital area
- Stitch or re-stitch up the female genital area
- Narrow the vaginal opening
- Cut or prick the clitoris
- Damage or cause injury to the female genital area

The Law forbids a person to:

- Cut a woman or girl child
- Take a person out of Australia to be cut
- To help take a person out of Australia to be cut

A person is breaking the law if they:

- Carry out the procedure
- Help carry out the procedure
- Find someone to carry out the procedure

Female Circumcision carries a penalty of up to 21 years imprisonment.