

# Female Genital Mutilation

## What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises 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.

(World Health Organisation)

## Types of FGM

**Type I** – Clitoridectomy: Partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals and/or the prepuce) and/or the clitoral hood or fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).

**Type II** – Excision: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the inner labia, with or without excision of the outer labia (the labia are the ‘lips’ that surround the vagina).

**Type III** – Infibulation: Narrowing of the vaginal opening by creating a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner or outer labia, with or without removal of the clitoris.

**Type IV** – All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising (burning) the genital area.

## Some reasons why FGM may be practised

Perceived to rid the family of bad luck/evil spirits	Perceived to uphold family honour
Perceived as more aesthetically desirable	Seen as a rite of passage into womanhood
Perceived to preserve a girl's virginity and chastity	To make the girl more ‘marriageable’
A custom/tradition of the family and/or community	Falsely believed to be a religious obligation
Believed to make future child birth safer	Believed to cleanse and purify the girl