

GCSE



CCEA GCSE TEACHER/STUDENT
GUIDANCE

Learning for Life and Work

Unit 2: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)



Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Click on the following link to watch an NHS video which provides information on Female Genital Mutilation (there is also a transcript available below)

<http://www.nhs.uk/video/pages/female-genital-mutilation.aspx>

Transcript

Female Genital Mutilation of young girls is child abuse.

What is FGM?

Female Genital Mutilation, or FGM, is all procedures where part or all of the external female genitalia are removed for non-medical reasons. Other terms include female circumcision, cutting, Gudnin, Tahur. It's a practice that occurs in specific populations. It can be performed at any stage of a woman's life, from infancy right up until adulthood. It's most commonly performed before puberty, perhaps between about the ages of five and eight. It's really a major infringement of women's human rights.

FGM violates human rights conventions that protect women and children from cruelty and violence.

FGM is illegal. FGM is against the law in the UK and has been so since 1985. If someone is found guilty of carrying out FGM in the UK or arranging for a girl to go abroad for FGM, then they face a maximum prison sentence of 14 years and a substantial fine if found guilty.

Who is at risk of FGM?

There are increasing numbers of women from FGM-practising communities living in the UK. There are two really separate and important issues here. Firstly, identifying women that have undergone FGM so that we can offer them appropriate health care. But second to that is the really important issue of young girls being at risk of FGM.

We know that the single most relevant fact that puts a girl at risk of FGM is to be born into a community that practises FGM. What that means is that it's really important for NHS staff, such as doctors, midwives and nurses, to be aware of this, but also for the general public, for people who may be working with children, such as teachers.

The most likely time that a young girl is taken abroad for FGM would be during the long school summer holiday. So it's important that if there is any suspicion that that might happen that the right people are informed.

Things that might lead you to suspect that would be if the child says she is going home for something special, some party or event after which she may be grown-up. Then you can ring the police. You can ring your local social services.

What are the consequences of FGM?

The short-term effects of FGM, if you imagine these procedures are done, in general, not by medical personnel. They're done under unsterile and unsanitary conditions. They're done without any anaesthetic or analgesia on a small child. The immediate consequences are obviously damage to the genital organs, removal of the genital organs, damage to surrounding organs. And this can lead to haemorrhage and to infection. The other effects which are more difficult to measure are it's clear that there are great psychological effects if you think about the trauma of such a procedure. So long-lasting psychological damage to women that have undergone this. Also increasingly we realise that it would cause psychosexual problems. If you have your clitoris removed, so you have no sensation and the vagina is narrow and sex is painful, then psychosexual problems are also common.

Global efforts to stop FGM are increasing. Because the instruments are not sterile, you also have an increased risk of blood-borne infections such as hepatitis B and HIV. Girls and women are left with urinary problems, such as incontinence, unable to control urine, or recurrent urinary tract infections. It increases the risk of infertility. If you do manage to become pregnant, you have an increased risk of haemorrhage during childbirth. There's also an increased risk that the baby may die during labour or shortly after birth.

What happens during pregnancy?

If a woman is pregnant and has had FGM, then she will need an assessment of the vagina to see whether the vagina is too narrow for her to give birth naturally. And if the vagina is too narrow, then she will require a procedure called a deinfibulation procedure. It is illegal to reinfibulate a woman who has had FGM following the birth. Sometimes that's called a reversal of FGM. It's not a true reversal. You can't put back the tissue, but it opens the vagina to make delivery of the baby easier.

What help and support is available?

There are specialist clinics throughout the UK that see women who have had FGM. It's really important that women have information on how to access those services.

For more information about FGM and where to go for advice or help, please visit www.nhs.uk/fgm

If you are worried that someone else may be at risk of, or affected by FGM, contact the Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000.

If you have been affected by FGM, or are worried that you may be at risk from FGM, contact the Metropolitan Police Child Abuse Investigation Command Project Azure helpline on 0207 161 2888.

FGM information, help and support www.nhs.uk/fgm

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

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