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.

The NETFA Project is run by the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health and is funded by the Commonwealth Government. For more information visit www.netfa.com.au or follow us on Twitter @EndFGM_NETFA.

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

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.

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.