

## The National Education Toolkit for FGM/C Awareness

The National Education Toolkit for FGM/C Awareness (NETFA) is a national project run by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and is funded by the Commonwealth Government. The project aims to further improve support and raise awareness of female circumcision within relevant Australian communities. For more information visit [www.FGMInAustralia.com.au](http://www.FGMInAustralia.com.au) or follow us on Twitter @EndFGM\_NETFA



## Support Services for circumcised women & girls.

This booklet is a guide for women and girls who have been circumcised and are in need of support

## The Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

The Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) is a national community based organisation that is committed to advancing the health and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee women through leadership, education and advocacy.

For multilingual resources visit:

[www.mcwh.com.au](http://www.mcwh.com.au)

or call us on a toll-free hotline at 1800 656 421.

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## Female Circumcision or Traditional Cutting

Female Circumcision is a cultural practice that alters the external female genital organs. It is sometimes referred to as 'Sunnah', Female Genital Cutting, Traditional Cutting or Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C).

All types of female circumcision have no health benefits and it is internationally recognised as a violation of human rights.

You have the right to access information in order to make decisions for your body, health and future. This includes making decisions on when, with who and whether you have sex, and choosing whether and when to have children. This booklet can help you understand your health rights and connect you to support services available in Australia.

## Health Impacts of Female Circumcision

Some women and girls may have short and long term physical and mental health impacts including:

### Long Term

- Scarring
- Cysts or abscesses
- Pain during periods or intercourse
- Problems during childbirth, such as perineal tearing due to the tightening of the vagina opening and scarring

### Short Term

- Bladder & Urinary tract infections
- Pain while urinating
- Severe pain
- Fever
- Bleeding

### Mental Health

- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress

Some women and girls may not have any health impacts. But if you experience any of the above symptoms, you can contact your doctor or the nearest service provider which you can find on pages 4 & 5 for assistance.

## Your Right to Good Health

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights of patients and anyone using the Australian Health System. It's important to know your rights when using the health system

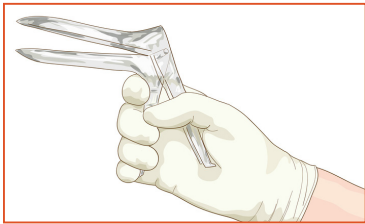
You have the right to:

- **Access** health information to help you make informed decisions. You can access free health information in many languages. Contact your nearest support service (pages 4 & 5) or visit the Multilingual Library at [www.mcwh.com.au](http://www.mcwh.com.au) or call 1800 656 421.
- Receive **safe** and high quality care.
- Receive care that **respects** you, your culture, beliefs and values.
- Receive clear **communication** and to know about any services, treatment, options and costs that affects you. If you need an interpreter, let the doctor, nurse or other health professional know. If you are not comfortable with the interpreter, you have the right to request for another interpreter or use an interpreter over the phone.
- **Participate** and be included in decisions related to your care. If you are unhappy with the decisions, you have the right to seek advice from another health professional for a second opinion.
- **Privacy** and confidentiality of your personal information.
- **Comment** on the care you receive and to have your concerns addressed. However, if you are unsatisfied with the treatment you receive, you have the right to complain. Every hospital has either a 'Patient Advocate' or 'Consumer Services' to support you.

## Procedures that may impact your circumcision

If you are circumcised, there are specific health conditions and procedures that you need to be aware of because it will help you obtain the best possible medical support

### Pap Test



If you have been sexually active, you will need to do a pap test every 2 years. If you are circumcised, it's important to let your doctor or nurse know before you have the procedure. The procedure can be uncomfortable but should not be painful. If in pain, let your doctor or nurse know immediately.

### Pregnancy



Because being circumcised can sometimes have an impact during pregnancy, labour and birth, it's important to discuss with your doctor the birth options that are available and how you can best be supported during your antenatal appointments.

### Reversing your Circumcision



Some circumcisions such as Infibulation or Pharaonic circumcision can be reversed. There are specialised doctors and nurses in Australia who can conduct a reversal procedure. This is called 'Deinfibulation'. Contact your nearest service provider (pages 4 & 5) for more information.

## Support services in Australia

If you are circumcised, there are support services across Australia that can respond to your specific needs. These services include:

- Clinical support such as reversing your circumcision  
This is important if you are planning to have children or be sexually active.
- One-on-One Counselling  
If you are feeling sad all the time, talking to a counsellor or someone you trust can help.
- Couples Counselling / Sex Therapy  
If you and your partner are having concerns about your relationship, both of you can see a counsellor together.
- Appropriate sexual and reproductive health information

Accurate sexual and reproductive health information can be accessed from your local doctor or contact your nearest service providers on pages 4 & 5.

## Female Circumcision is illegal in Australia.

Practising female circumcision is illegal in Australia. All states and territories have laws banning the practice. This includes taking a girl child overseas to have circumcision performed. In addition, doctors are not allowed to re-stitch a woman after they have given birth. For more information go to [www.fgminaustralia.com.au](http://www.fgminaustralia.com.au)

## Contacts of Support Service

Below are the contact details of organisations across Australia that can help you or refer you to an appropriate support service. If you require an interpreter, you should let the organisation know.

### Victoria

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health  
Phone: +61 (03) 9418 0913

Banyule Community Health  
Phone: +61 (03) 9450 2063

Darebin Council Youth Services  
Phone: +61 (03) 8470 8001

Mercy Hospital for Women  
Phone: +61 (03) 8458 4150

Cohealth-Collingwood  
Phone: +61 (03) 9411 4333

### Tasmania

Red Cross Hobart  
Phone: +61 (03) 6235 60013

Royal Women's Hospital  
Phone: +61 (03) 8345 3058

Women's Health in the North  
Phone: +61 (03) 9484 1666

Women's Health in the West  
Phone: +61 (03) 9689 9588

Monash Health - Dandenong  
Phone: +61 (03) 9594 6666

Cohealth - Kensington  
Phone: +61 (03) 8378 1642

Red Cross Launceston  
Phone: +61 (03) 6326 0400

### New South Wales

NSW Education Program on FGM  
Phone: +61 (02) 9840 3910

### Western Australia

Women and Newborn Health Service  
Phone: +61 (08) 9340 1557

### Queensland

Multicultural Women's Health  
Phone: +61 (07) 3250 0250

### A.C.T.

ACT Health  
Phone: +61 (02) 6205 1078

### South Australia

Migrant Health Service  
Phone: +61 (08) 8237 3912

### Northern Territory

Family Planning & Welfare  
Phone: +61 (08) 8948 0144