



Teach Yourself: Facts about FGC

Key facts & information to help you inform your community about FGC.

Introduction

FGC can be a very difficult topic to talk about – generations of misinformation and secrecy have led many communities to believe that this practice is good, and demanded by tradition or religion. However, you can equip yourself with knowledge and facts about the devastating effects this harmful practice has on girls and on communities as a whole. Once you have this knowledge, you can begin to speak to your community and congregation about these issues with authority.

The following information sheets provide the key medical facts about FGC – they also provide answers to some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) that may arise about this practice and its place in your community. These information sheets have many uses in your conversations with your community about FGC – it is up to you.

Here are some of the ways you can use these information sheets, and their accompanying FAQ's.

- They are a quick way to brush up on your knowledge about FGC.
- They can be used as a quick reference for you when answering tough questions from your community about FGC.
- They can be given to your fellow faith and community leaders as a factual resource on the practices of FGC.
- They can be given to literate members of your congregation as educational resources on FGC.

Instructions

Read the following information, and absorb all the information on them. Begin with the key facts. Once you feel you understand the key facts about both FGC, move on to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's). Some of these FAQ's seek to address cultural and historical ideas, not medical facts – therefore, when you read these FAQ's, ask yourself if you agree with the answers. If you have questions that these information sheets cannot answer, take this as an opportunity to seek out further information from a trusted source about FGC. If you agree with the answers to each FAQ, think of some other questions that members of your community may ask in a conversation about FGC, and how you might answer them. The possibilities are endless!

Key Facts about FGC, A Basic Information Sheet

- 1) Female Genital Cutting (FGC) is illegal in our country.
- 2) FGC can cause infection, whether from the procedure itself or complications afterwards.
- 3) FGC can cause obstetric fistula, a condition causing incontinence of urine or feces, and many other damaging physical and mental issues for the woman affected.
- 4) FGC makes marital relations and childbirth/delivery extremely painful, due to an excess of scar tissue and an obstructed vaginal opening.
- 5) FGC can cause infant and maternal mortality, due to the obstructed vaginal opening.
- 6) FGC is not healthy circumcision; it is instead like removing the entire male member.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Female Genital Cutting (FGC): A Christian Perspective

Below you will find both Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and their answers, relative to Christian perspectives on female genital cutting (FGC) and its negative impact on health and **well-being**, as well as Biblical references.

Q: What is the Church's view on FGC?

Several Christian denominations have issued official statements declaring FGC as harmful, and a crime before God and humanity. FGC is a tradition that predates Christianity. It is not condoned in the Bible or any other holy texts. There are some traditions like FGC that, despite being harmful have become accepted. Many faith leaders in fact agree that FGC is harmful and non-Christian, but until now have felt powerless to do anything against the social customs and tradition, or felt it was not their place to interfere. It may seem as though Christianity condones or supports FGC. However, research indicates that most Faith Leaders who condone or support FGC do so because they do not want to incur social stigma by violating the local tradition.

Q: What are the actual effects of FGC? What are the medical facts?

FGC is not equivalent to male circumcision; male circumcision is the removal of foreskin, FGC is the removal of an entire functioning organ. Removal of the clitoris and labia minora is equivalent to removal of the entire male member. FGC can cause infection (including HIV), whether from the procedure itself when non-sterile blades are used, or complications afterwards. There are many nerves and blood vessels in the female genitalia, so a girl will experience excruciating pain and in some cases bleed to death during the procedure. FGC is thought to reduce a burning, dysfunctional sexual desire: in reality, it does not reduce desire, but instead causes agonizing pain during sexual intercourse. FGC scars are painful, and often tear during sexual relations and childbirth, causing dangerous amounts of bleeding. FGC can cause fistula, which means a tear between the urethra and vaginal opening, leading to incontinence of urine or feces. FGC can also cause infertility, as a result of infection or fistula. FGC can cause infant and maternal mortality, due an obstructed vaginal opening. In summary, there are no medical benefits to FGC.

A Faith Leader Toolkit to Address Harmful Traditional Practices in Your Community



FGC can lead to serious complications during childbirth. A woman who has not undergone FGC has a better chance of safely delivering a healthy baby.

Q: If FGC is harmful, why have our communities practiced it so long without punishment?

Generations of practice can often make tradition seem like truth, even if some of those traditions are harmful to our children. FGC is illegal in our country, but these traditions and their attached social stigmas are very strong. Many law enforcement officials fear social stigma themselves, and are therefore reluctant to fully punish offenders. Additionally, a lack of money, organization, and resources on the legal level makes it very hard to enforce laws against FGC. However, God commands us to seek what is right and proclaim the truth, even in the face of opposition. FGC is illegal in our country, and as Peter 2:13-16, says, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil." Anti-FGC laws agree perfectly with God's will and word in the Bible – therefore, as Christians, we should obey all of these laws.

Scriptural and Theological Guides Related to Early Marriage (EM) A Guide for Christian Faith Leaders

A scriptural guide for Christian faith leaders who seek to eradicate FGC.

Below are key messages developed by Christian faith leaders, along with scriptural and other references that support each message in relation to eliminating FGC.

1) All human life has dignity.

- i. We are perfect creations of the perfect creator. “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.” (Psalm 139:14).
- ii. FGC, or the removal of a beautiful, healthy, functioning body part, is calling ugly/offensive what God has made clean. “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” (Acts 10:15).

2) Both boys and girls should be treated with love and respect—on an equal basis.

- iii. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” This means that we should love both boys and girls in our families equally, and not value one above the other. Practices like FGC and early marriage imply that we value boys above girls; this is not how God wants us to treat each other.

3) God’s creation is perfect.

- iv. After creating both man and woman, “God saw all that he had made, and (said) it was **very good**.” (Genesis 1:31)
- v. FGC, when used to ensure virginity before marriage and fidelity after marriage, is punishing the innocent before a sin was even committed – this type of injustice towards the innocent deeply hurts God.
 - i. In fact, God never intended for us to consider any part of our bodies shameful or ugly: “Adam and his wife were both naked, and felt no shame.” (Genesis 2:25). It was only after the fall of Adam and Eve, when they were tempted by Satan, that they covered their bodies out of shame. “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.” (Genesis 3:7) This is not to say that we should go around naked in our daily lives, but to show that God never originally created humans with offensive, shameful parts that need removal. After the fall, still under the influence of evil, they concluded that sexual/reproductive organs are shameful. Still, however, God did not say that

these parts need to be removed. Believing that these parts are so disgusting and dangerous that they require removal is a further corruption.

- vi. FGC is neither beneficial to healthy family life nor is it a healthy covenant with God; instead, it is an insult to God through an act of violence and humiliation toward innocent women and girls. The Old Testament signs of covenant included MALE – ONLY circumcision. Genesis 12: 2-3: “Every male among you shall be circumcised.” In these days, it was a sign of closeness with God, something that set them apart from the nonbelievers.
 - i. However, 1st Corinthians 7:19, St. Paul said, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing.” As the Word of God (the Bible) does not contradict itself, the above verses mean that male circumcision was a sign of covenant during the Old Testament times, but in the New Testament circumcision does not have any religious significance. It is only a health measure, which does not affect the male penis in the same way it affects the female clitoris/other parts.
 - ii. FGC is not the same as male circumcision. Medically speaking, the glans clitoris is equivalent to the head of the penis – to cut either off is a gross affront to human dignity, as it deprives victims of the potential joy found in healthy marital relations.

4) Knowledgeable, responsible, happy, healthy, and productive communities work to eliminate harmful practices like FGC.

- The proven harms of FGC are great, and there are no actual benefits.
 - i. FGC can cause infertility, as well as obstructed labor and other birth complications.
 - ii. FGC can cause infections, whether during the procedure or afterwards.
 - i. FGC has life-long consequences, and can even cause death.
 - ii. FGC does NOT eliminate sexual desire.
- We do not cut off our hands so that we might not steal, for the desire/command to steal comes from the brain and not from the hand.
 - i. Indeed, according to Matthew 5:27-28, sexual sin, or adultery, includes lustful looks and thoughts - which are not removed by cutting the genitalia: “You have heard it said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at another with lustful intent has already committed adultery in their hearts.” Therefore, cutting the genitalia to prevent sexual immorality does useless, irreversible harm and no good.
 - ii. God commands us not to punish the innocent, but instead to protect them. “Help the weak” (Thessalonians 5:23). Young girls cannot defend themselves properly when others want to harm a part of their body – but we can be a voice for the voiceless by ending the practice in our communities.

The practice of FGC does not just hurt one girl; it hurts the entire community, and robs it of its dignity.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Female Genital Cutting (FGC): A Muslim Perspective

Below you will find both Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) relative to Muslim perspectives on FGC and its negative impact on health and wellbeing, as well as Muslim scriptural references.

Q: What are the actual effects of FGC? What are the medical facts?

FGC is not equivalent to male circumcision; male circumcision is the removal of foreskin, FGC is the removal of an entire functioning organ. Removal of the clitoris and labia minora is equivalent to removal of the entire male member. FGC can cause infection (including HIV), whether from the procedure itself when non-sterile blades are used, or complications afterwards. There are many nerves and blood vessels in the female genitalia, so a girl will experience excruciating pain and in some cases bleed to death during the procedure. FGC is thought to reduce a burning, dysfunctional sexual desire: in reality, it does not actually reduce desire, but instead causes agonizing pain during sexual intercourse. FGC scars are painful, and often tear during sexual relations and childbirth, causing dangerous amounts of bleeding. FGC can cause fistula, which means incontinence of urine or feces. FGC can also cause infertility, as a result of infection or fistula. FGC can cause infant and maternal mortality, due to obstruction of the vaginal opening. In summary, there are no medical benefits to FGC.

Q: If FGC is harmful, why have the faith leaders blessed our ceremonies and condoned it for so long?

FGC is a tradition that predates Islam, dating back to *“al- gahiliyyah,”* or, *“the era of ignorance.”* It is not officially sanctioned in any holy texts. Tradition is very strong, and is often accepted as the truth over time. While most tradition is beneficial, some are very harmful, especially to our children. FGC has continued in our communities for many reasons. Because discussion of sexuality is often taboo, people have wrongfully remained ignorant about the facts of FGC, and simply relied on ideas passed on from previous generations. Low levels of education and literacy mean that many of our people, and even many of our traditional and faith leaders, lack proper knowledge and training on the topic. Many of our faith leaders in fact believe that FGC is harmful, but feel powerless to do anything against the social customs and tradition, or feel it is not their place to interfere. However, Allah commands us to seek knowledge, know what is right, and proclaim the truth, even in the face of opposition: **“Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make a path to Paradise easy for him.”** (Hadith of Al-Bukhaari).

Female Genital Cutting

A Faith Leader Toolkit
to Address Harmful
Traditional Practices
in Your Community

TEACH YOURSELF
MODULE 2



FGC can lead to serious complications during childbirth. A woman who has not undergone FGC has a better chance of safely delivering a healthy baby.

Scriptural and Theological Guides Related to Early Marriage (EM) A Guide for Muslim Faith Leaders

A guide for Muslim faith leaders who seek to eradicate FGC.

Below are key messages developed by Muslim faith leaders, along with scriptural and other references that support that message in relation to eliminating FGC.

1) All human life has dignity.

- We are all perfect creations of Allah, the perfect creator.
 - i. Cutting or harming a body part that we were born with when there is nothing wrong with it, as happens in FGC, goes against Allah's wishes.
 - ii. *"...and there is no changing Allah's creation. And that is the proper religion but many people do not know"* (Quran 30:30)
 - iii. *"...and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction"* (Quran 2:195)

2) Both boys and girls should be treated with love and respect.

- Quran 60:8 "God loves the equitable."
 - i. We are all fellow human beings, not one physically inferior to the other: "Assuredly, women are the twin halves of men." (Sahih reported by Abu-Dawud (RA) This is physically, factually true – cutting of the clitoris is equivalent to the cutting off of the entire male penis. We are physically wired very similarly, just constructed differently! Allah wants us to act according to the truth, and FGC is not in line with this Quranic ideal. In other words, gender inequality is not Islamic.
 - ii. Acts such as FGC punish the innocent in the absence of a crime—which is an injustice before Allah. The Prophet did not recommend it for any of the women in his house, nor did he approve of the practice when he saw it being done.
- **Hadith of Ummu-Attiya:** This is the *Hadith* most commonly used to link FGC to Islam. The *Hadith* relates that the Prophet said to a woman of Medina, a circumciser called Ummu-Attiyah, "O Umm `Attiyyah, 'ashimmi' and do not exaggerate; as doing so will preserve the fairness of the woman's face and satisfy the husband." As one Islamic scholar noted, one line of this *hadith* attempts to express the reaction of the Prophet to the screaming of the girl being circumcised. "The Prophet held his head and shared her agony" for a while—meaning he disagreed with this pre-Islamic, harmful traditional practice. Cognizant of the contextual interpretation of the *Hadith*, other scholars believe that during that time, the Prophet was not authoritative enough to strongly denounce such widely tolerated traditional practice.

- Quran 4:124 “But the believers who do good works, both men and women, shall enter paradise.”
- Men and women are equal in the sight of God.
- FGC is a practice that can harm a girl for the rest of her life – affecting her ability to enjoy a relationship with her husband, and often making childbirth complicated and unbearable.

3) Allah’s creation is perfect.

- “Verily we created man of the best stature” (Quran: 96:4).
 - i. The beauty of a human body is to be left as it was created by Allah, unless there is an authentic basis allowing interference with it. Authentic bases include medical indications and the clearly stated male circumcision. Conversely, FGC could be seen as an insult to Allah that is an issue to repent/confess for saying (in action): ***your creation is imperfect, let me correct it for you!*** Of course, the underpinning argument is that Allah has created women abnormally, and that we need to take corrective measures. Current medical science, however, agrees with perfect creation.
- FGC is not a form of circumcision at all, anatomically; therefore, it is not a healthy covenant with God, as with male circumcision.
 - i. It is instead an insult to God through an act of violence and humiliation on innocent people.
 - ii. It is not equivalent to male circumcision – in fact, it is like removing the entire male member.
- “Oh you messenger [Muhammad] proclaim [the message] which has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not then you have not conveyed His message” (Quran: 5: 67).
 - i. If FGC was a religious requirement, the Prophet would have explicitly taught it, and his wives and daughters would have been circumcised. The Prophet taught about correct Islamic behavior in all aspects of life, including toilet manners, table manners, relations between husband and wife, and so on. It is not logical, therefore, that he would be silent on a matter that affects an important human reproductive organ.
- Kindness means never inflicting harm unless necessary – and even then, mercy is far more admirable

4) Knowledgeable, responsible, happy, healthy, and productive communities work to eliminate harmful practices like FGC.

- The harms of FGC outweigh the benefits.
 - i. FGC can cause infertility, as well as obstructed labor, and other birth complications.
 - ii. FGC can cause infections, whether during the procedure or afterwards.
 - iii. FGC has lifelong health consequences, and can lead to death.
- “And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he/she has saved the life of the whole people” (Quran 5:32).
 - i. There is no question that stopping the practice of FGC saves and greatly improves lives. True heroes in the community are those who combat harmful and deadly practices like FGC.
 - ii. Halting unnecessarily cruel practices like FGC can improve the lives of the whole community – girls who are healthier are happier, and enter into marriages better-prepared to enjoy a good relationship with their husbands.
- According to the Quran, any act that amounts to changing Allah’s creation is considered the work of Satan.
 - i. Iblis (Satan) who said, “Verily I will mislead them and surely arouse in them false desires and I will order them to slit the ears of cattle and indeed I will order them to change the nature created by Allah...” (Quran: 4: 119).
- The practice of FGC does not just hurt one girl; it hurts the entire community, and robs it of its full potential.
 - i. “Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts...” (Quran 13:11). We cannot make great changes in our communities until we change our thoughts and feelings towards all humans – this means recognizing the full humanity of and showing compassion towards girls and women, as with all people.

The practice of FGC does not just hurt one girl; it hurts the entire community, and robs it of its dignity.

Teach Yourself: Medical Facts about FGC

Anatomy Lesson

The basics on FGC:

- [Speaking Guide – Christian](#)
- [Speaking Guide – Muslim](#)

Anatomy Flipchart

Female Anatomy Lesson

THE BASICS OF FGC

Introduction

Thank you for picking up this guide, and for being willing to engage your community in honest discussion about a topic that may be fairly taboo. This anatomy lesson can serve as a guide for dispelling myths about the female anatomy, and discussing the negative effects of FGC on the human body. Many of your participants may have never seen material like this before, so please feel free to present the material as you deem appropriate – in youth groups, for example, you may modify the lesson and language as necessary, and if you see fit, omit showing the participants the diagrams, instead, using them to facilitate a discussion of the myths regarding female anatomy, and how FGC hurts girls.

Instructions

There are three major types of FGC carried out on young girls, and this anatomy lesson intends to show what each form of FGC looks like in comparison to a set of healthy, normal female external genitalia.

This guide consists of four medical diagrams, with labels, and a speaking guide for each:

- 1) A diagram showing a set of healthy, normal female external genitalia, without FGC.
- 2) A diagram showing a set of female genitalia subjected to FGC Type I (removal of the prepuce, or removal of the prepuce and partial or total removal of the clitoris).

- 3) A diagram showing a set of female genitalia subjected to FGC Type II (removal of the prepuce, clitoris, and all or part of the labia minora).
- 4) A diagram showing a set of female genitalia subjected to FGC Type III, also known as infibulation (removal of the prepuce, clitoris, and the labia minora, with the labia majora sewn together covering the urethra and vagina, leaving only a small hole for urine and menstrual fluid).

After presenting each anatomy illustration, ask the following questions:

- 5) Is there anything you find unclear about the diagram?
- 6) Is there anything offensive about the diagram?
- 7) How would you suggest we improve the visual aids (including eliminating them)?

Included also in this lesson is a speaking guide with a wrap-up/conclusion detailing the main medical facts that dispel many of the common myths associated with FGC. Read and familiarize yourself with this speaking guide, and make sure you understand all of the information.

We understand that this may be used for a variety of audiences, including youth and adults of all ages. Please use the speaking guide as you deem appropriate, depending on your audience, their age, and their level of knowledge – you may modify your language and mode of presentation as you see fit, it's up to you. Remember, however, that this is all useful, vital information that communities need to know in order to change their knowledge of and attitudes towards FGC, and work towards eliminating this harmful practice altogether.

Myths, Facts, and the Reality of FGC: A Christian Perspective

Speaking Guide:

“I want to begin by thanking you all for being so willing to listen and discuss about a very important topic that affects all of us, whether we are men or women, boys or girls. We are going to learn about the female body, and the parts that God, our creator, has chosen to put there. “

“Many of you may know about the practice of female genital cutting, or FGC. This is something that is done to girls and women in our community for many reasons. Some feel that cutting the female genitalia is a practice that is pleasing to God, and that it is required for a woman to be a good wife and mother. Others believe that the female genitalia will grow to the ground, or that they will produce worms and a foul smell if they are left uncut. Still others believe that a woman without FGC will be unable to have children, and that FGC is the only way a woman can live a happy, healthy life.”

“What do all of these ideas have in common? They are false, and based on generations of myths and misunderstandings. FGC is a practice that has no health benefits for any girl or woman.

“I would like to ask you now: what have you heard about FGC in your life? What reasons have people used to justify it as a good practice?”

[OPEN UP TO GROUP FOR DISCUSSION, THEN COME BACK TO SPEAKING GUIDE]

One thing you all must know is that many of the reasons given to justify FGC are based on myths, not on truths. FGC does not make a woman more fertile, or able to have more children. In fact, FGC can often make a woman unable to have children. Many may think a girl needs FGC to keep her genitalia from growing to the ground. Still others believe that the female genitalia are “dirty” or “ugly” without FGC. Here are the facts: the female genitalia will *not* grow to the ground, nor are they “dirty” or “ugly” when left alone. FGC often leaves women and girls with a lifetime of unnecessary pain and suffering. Finally, FGC is not pleasing to God – in fact, it is quite the opposite, since FGC is like telling God, ‘Your creation is imperfect, let me correct it for you!’”

No Blame or Shame, Just Change!

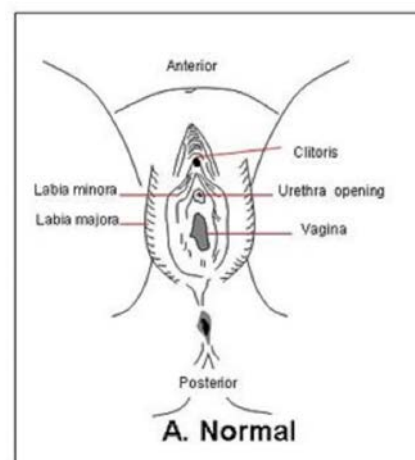
“Even if we have promoted the practice of FGC ourselves, or had it done to us, we can stop the practice of FGC in our community right now. How? By educating ourselves about the real, medical facts behind FGC, learning more about our bodies and ourselves, and having open, honest discussions about how these things affect our daily lives. Eliminating practices like FGC can and will make our lives, and the lives of our children and all generations after, better and healthier.”

“Now, let’s begin by looking at some diagrams of the female anatomy, and see how a normal, healthy female genitalia compares to one that has been circumcised.”

[NOTE: THE FOUR SMALLER PICTURES BELOW EACH REFER TO THE CORRESPONDING INDIVIDUAL PICTURES ON THE LARGER PICTURE]

Picture A: Uncircumcised (normal) female genitalia

“This is a picture of the female genitalia, as viewed when a girl or woman is lying on her back, with her legs bent sideways. I understand that you may have never seen anything like this before, or you may be shocked and ask yourself, “why is this disgusting Picture being shown to us?” To that, I answer that this is nothing to be considered disgusting. The Lord God created both men and women, and made their parts wonderfully complex. According to Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that He made,” *including the female genitalia*, “and said that it was very good.” Therefore, God has made our bodies perfectly, so we should not be shocked by seeing diagrams of our own bodies, in their natural state, in His house of worship. Additionally, we should not call any of our parts “disgusting”: Acts 10:15 affirmed that “we should not call impure what God has made clean.”



“There are six main parts in the healthy, normal female genitalia: the clitoris, the prepuce, the labia minora, the labia majora, the urethral opening, and the vagina.”

[POINT TO URETHRAL OPENING] “This is the urethral opening. Many of you may confuse this with the vagina, since all fluids seem to come from the same opening in a woman’s body. However, the urthral opening is very different from the vagina, in that its sole purpose is for ridding the body of toxins through urine. **[POINT TO VAGINA]** The vagina is the opening through which a woman delivers a baby, and experiences sexual intercourse. This opening is very complex and sensitive, and requires many layers of protection from germs and outside damage, as well as help stretching during childbirth.

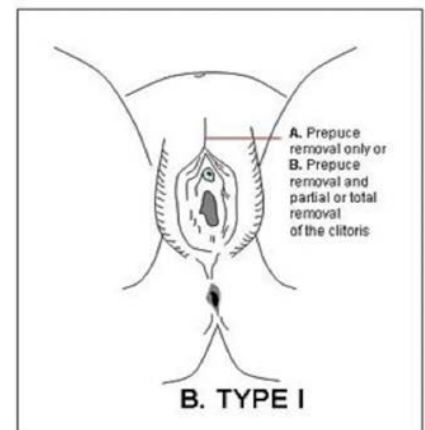
[POINT TO LABIA MAJORA AND LABIA MINORA] These are the labia majora, or outer lips, and labia minora, or inner lips. Their main purpose is to protect the vagina from damage, as well as aiding sexual excitation – they are very sensitive, with many nerves, and they also produce a liquid that lubricates sexual intercourse, making it easier. **[POINT TO CLITORIS]** At the top, where the two sets of lips, the labia minora and labia majora, meet, there is a little pea-sized node called the clitoris. This little organ is one of the most misunderstood parts of the female body. Modern medical science proves that this is the only organ of its kind – small, densely packed with nerves, very complex, and built solely for the purpose of pleasure. The clitoris has over 8,000 sensory nerves whose sole purposes are to stimulate sexual pleasure. While this is a female organ, and it is largely meant for female sexual pleasure, it is vital for male enjoyment as well – the clitoris excites all of the other parts of the female genitalia, making it easier for the man to penetrate and enjoy sexual relations. **[POINT TO PREPUCE]** This is the prepuce, or the covering for the clitoris. It is formed by the meeting of the labia minora over the clitoris. Its purpose is to protect the clitoris from damage.”

“When any of these parts are cut or damaged, it severely impairs a woman’s God-given right to enjoyment of marital sexual relations, which are necessary for a joyful family life. Damage to these parts often results in massive bleeding, infection (including HIV), lifelong pain, incontinence, and even death from all of these complications. Additionally, damage to these parts puts a mother at a serious risk of dying in childbirth, and makes her child far more likely to die as well. Therefore, if we want our community to be one of healthy and happy families, we must eliminate the practice of FGC.”

“Now, we are going to see examples of the three different main types of FGC used in our community, and in communities across of Nigeria, and how they harm the female genitalia.”

Picture B: FGC Type I

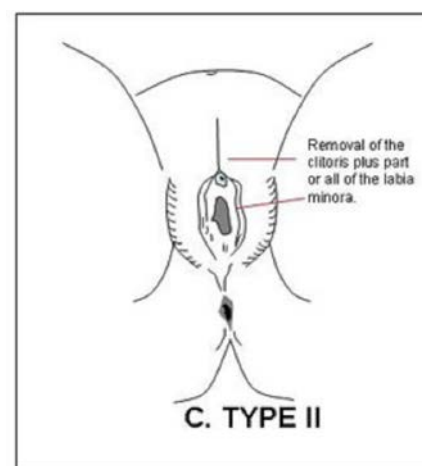
“This is a picture of the female genitalia when FGC Type I has been performed. FGC Type I is performed by cutting/damaging the prepuce, and then possibly damaging or removing the clitoris. As you can see in this picture, both the prepuce and the clitoris have been removed, and the labia majora may be sewn together to close off the top, forming scar tissue. In many cases, circumcisers attempt to remove only the prepuce, comparing the procedure to a male circumcision. Although the prepuce has similar nature to that of foreskin of the penis, its small size and attachment to the clitoris makes it difficult to remove without damaging the clitoris,



unlike in male circumcision, where the foreskin can be removed without damaging the penis. Thus, it is nearly impossible, even for the most skilled circumcisers, to cut the prepuce without damaging the clitoris. A victim of FGC Type I will usually suffer from immense pain, massive bleeding, infection (including HIV), pain during sex, lack of sexual satisfaction, infertility, fistula (which means incontinence either of urine or feces), and problems in childbirth. One out of seven girls subjected to FGC Type I die as a result of the procedure, whether from infection or bleeding out during the process, or during childbirth.”

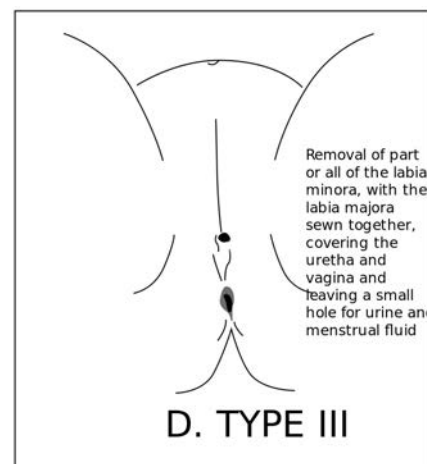
Picture C: FGC Type II

“In this picture, we see the genitalia of a girl or woman who has been subjected to FGC Type II. FGC Type II is performed by removing the clitoris with all or part of the labia minora. As we know from looking at the diagram of the healthy female genitalia, the labia minora (inner lips) have several important functions, including protecting the vagina from damage and germs and facilitating sexual intercourse (they are very sensitive and excitable, and produce a secretion that lubricates sexual intercourse, making it easier for penetration and more pleasurable for both parties). The victim of FGC Type II suffers from all the same effects as the victim of FGC Type I – except more severely. One out of three girls subjected to FGC Type II dies from complications of the procedure, whether from bleeding, infection, or in childbirth.”



Picture D: FGC Type III

“This picture shows the genitalia of a victim of FGC Type III, also known as ‘infibulation’. This is the worst type of FGC, and it is widely performed in the Afar, Somali, and Harari regions of Nigeria. In this type of FGC, all external sexual organs are removed, including the clitoris, labia minora (inner lips), and labia majora (outer lips). In addition, the remainder of the labia majora will be sewn together, leaving only a small hole for urine and menstruation. The girl or woman subjected to FGC Type III is left this way until her wedding day, when her scar is ripped open for sexual intercourse – she is then repaired, making her opening only large enough for the husband to penetrate her. She is re-opened during childbirth, and this is often a very painful, bloody,



and fatal procedure. The victims of FGC Type III suffer from all the same effects as victims of the previous types of FGC, except to an even more severe degree, and with more of a risk for bleeding, shock, infection, and death in childbirth – their babies are far more likely to die as well. Research has shown that half of all girls who undergo FGC Type III die from complications directly related to the procedure, whether from bleeding, infection, or in childbirth.”

“FGC is a good example of humans believing they are wiser than God, our creator. The damage of FGC is not limited to the just the mother, even: as mentioned throughout our lesson, 10-20% of infants born from mothers who have been subjected to FGC die because of complications directly related to her FGC – especially since FGC limits the elasticity of the vagina as a birth control. If a baby’s mother has had FGC, the baby may become stuck, suffocate, and die. While all misfortunes are not all our fault, this is something in our community that we can fix. FGC is bad for the entire community, and eliminating it will save lives.”

“Now, we are going to discuss some common myths that lead people to practice FGC, and explain why they are not true, using our newfound knowledge about the female anatomy.”

- 1) **MYTH:** ‘FGC removes the harmful, dirty, disgusting parts of the female genitalia.’
FACT: The female genitalia do not have any ‘harmful,’ ‘dirty,’ or ‘disgusting parts’. The parts commonly cut during FGC in our region, the clitoris and the labia minora, have a very important function in sexual pleasure. A victim of FGC usually suffers from a lack of sexual satisfaction, if not excruciating pain, which in turn affects her husband’s sexual pleasure. A joyful marriage is based on mutual satisfaction, and FGC works against that.
- 2) **MYTH:** ‘Without FGC, the female parts will produce a foul smell, making the girl undesirable.’
FACT: Starting at puberty, the time when a girl begins to mature physically into a woman, the vagina naturally produces a little bit of secretion. Unless cleaned on a daily basis, it might very well cause a bad smell. However, the same is true for men – unless a man cleans his genitalia on a daily basis, they may also produce a bad smell. Some communities believe that ‘clearing out’ the area through FGC is the solution. However, this logic is like saying all people should be scalped to prevent head lice. Therefore, the solution is not FGC, but being aware of personal hygiene, and cleaning ourselves every day.

Wrap Up

“In summary, FGC results in multiple short-term and long-term complications. Short term complications, during and immediately after the procedure, include excruciating pain, massive bleeding, and infection. 10% of all girls who are subjected to all types of FGC die from the procedure itself, whether from bleeding or infection shortly after. Long term complications include psychological damage from such trauma to intimate, sensitive body parts, sexual complications, complications in childbirth, and lifelong pain. These complications lead to much discord between spouses, and within families. This kind of family instability leads to community instability, which leads to national instability in Nigeria.

Therefore, for the good of our communities and our nation, we must educate ourselves. We must dispel myths about practices like FGC by asking one question: is this really good for our girls, our boys, and our families? Knowing all that we do now about the female anatomy, it is clear that FGC is incredibly harmful, not only to women and girls, but to everyone around them. It may be uncomfortable for us to talk about the human body the way we have just now, but these are honest discussions that need to happen, and will make our community healthier and happier.

“FGC is not pleasing to God. Our bodies are God’s perfect creations, and knowledge about this is power!”

Myths, Facts, and the Reality of FGC A Muslim Perspective

Speaking Guide

“I want to begin by thanking you all for being so willing to listen and discuss about a very important topic that affects all of us, whether we are men or women, boys or girls. We are going to learn about the female body, and the parts that Allah, our creator, has chosen to put there. “

“Many of you may know about the practice of female genital cutting, or FGC. This is something that is done to girls and women in our community for many reasons. Some feel that cutting the female genitalia is a practice that is pleasing to Allah, and that it is required for a woman to be a good wife and mother. Others believe that the female genitalia will grow to the ground, or that they will produce worms and a foul smell if they are left uncut. Still others believe that a woman without FGC will be unable to have children, and that FGC is the only way a woman can live a happy, healthy life.”

“What do all of these ideas have in common? They are false, and based on generations of myth and misunderstanding. FGC is a practice that has no health benefits for any girl or woman.

“I would like to ask you now: what have you heard about FGC in your life? What reasons have people used to justify it as a good practice?”

[OPEN UP TO GROUP FOR DISCUSSION, THEN COME BACK TO SPEAKING GUIDE]

One thing you all must know is that many of the reasons given to justify FGC are based on myths, not on truths. FGC does not make a woman more fertile, or able to have more children. In fact, FGC can often make a woman unable to have children. Many may think a girl needs FGC to keep her genitalia from growing to the ground. Still others believe that the female genitalia are “dirty” or “ugly” without FGC. Here are the facts: the female genitalia will *not* grow to the ground, nor are they “dirty” or “ugly” when left alone. FGC often leaves women and girls with a lifetime of unnecessary pain and suffering. Finally, FGC is not pleasing to Allah – in fact, it is quite the opposite, since FGC is like telling Allah, ‘Your creation is imperfect, let me correct it for you!’”

No Blame or Shame, Just Change!

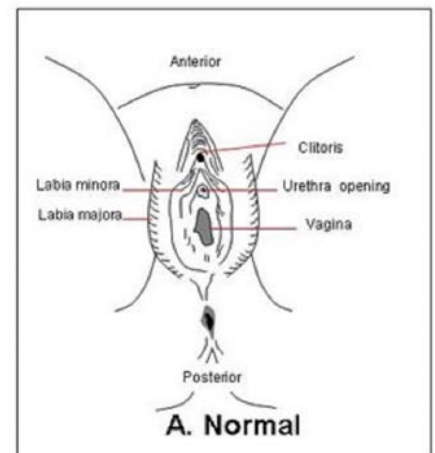
“Even if we have promoted the practice of FGC ourselves, or had it done to us, we can stop the practice of FGC in our community right now. How? By educating ourselves about the real, medical facts behind FGC, learning more about our bodies and ourselves, and having open, honest discussions about how these things affect our daily lives. Eliminating practices like FGC can and will make our lives, and the lives of our children and all generations after, better and healthier.”

“Now, let’s begin by looking at some diagrams of the female anatomy, and see how a normal, healthy female genitalia compares to one that has been circumcised.”

[NOTE: THE FOUR SMALLER PICTURES BELOW EACH REFER TO THE CORRESPONDING INDIVIDUAL PICTURES ON THE LARGER FLIPCHART]

Picture A: Uncircumcised (normal) female genitalia

“This is a picture of the female genitalia, as viewed when a girl or woman is lying on her back, with her legs bent sideways. I understand that you may have never seen anything like this before, or you may be shocked and ask yourself, “why is this disgusting picture being shown to us?” To that, I answer that this is nothing to be considered disgusting. Allah created both men and women, and made their parts wonderfully complex. Therefore, Allah has made our bodies perfectly, so we should not be shocked by seeing diagrams of our own bodies, in their natural state, in His house of worship. According to Quran 96:4, “verily we created man of the best stature.” Additionally, we should not think that any part that Allah has created perfectly is ‘disgusting,’ or needs removal. Quran 30:30 says, ‘there is no changing Allah’s creation. And that is the proper religion but many people do not know.’”



“There are six main parts in the healthy, normal female genitalia: the clitoris, the prepuce, the labia minora, the labia majora, the urethral opening, and the vagina.”

[POINT TO URETHRAL OPENING] “This is the urethral opening. Many of you may confuse this with the vagina, since all fluids seem to come from the same opening in a woman’s body. However, the urthral

opening is very different from the vagina, in that its sole purpose is for ridding the body of toxins through urine. **[POINT TO VAGINA]** The vagina is the opening through which a woman delivers a baby, and experiences sexual intercourse. This opening is very complex and sensitive, and requires many layers of protection from germs and outside damage, as well as help stretching during childbirth.

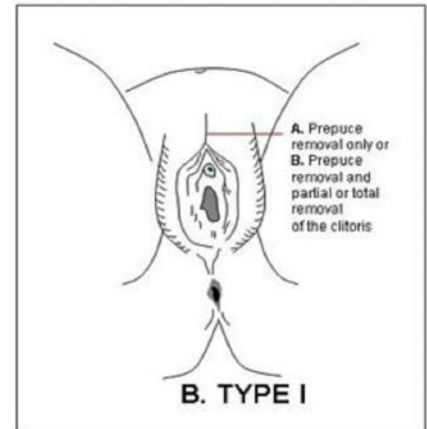
[POINT TO LABIA MAJORA AND LABIA MINORA] These are the labia majora, or outer lips, and labia minora, or inner lips. Their main purpose is to protect the vagina from damage, as well as aiding sexual excitation – they are very sensitive, with many nerves, and they also produce a liquid that lubricates sexual intercourse, making it easier. **[POINT TO CLITORIS]** At the top, where the two sets of lips, the labia minora and labia majora, meet, there is a little pea-sized node called the clitoris. This little organ is one of the most misunderstood parts of the female body. Modern medical science proves that this is the only organ of its kind – small, densely packed with nerves, very complex, and built solely for the purpose of pleasure. The clitoris has over 8,000 sensory nerves whose sole purposes are to stimulate sexual pleasure. While this is a female organ, and it is largely meant for female sexual pleasure, it is vital for male enjoyment as well – the clitoris excites all of the other parts of the female genitalia, making it easier for the man to penetrate and enjoy sexual relations. **[POINT TO PREPUCE]** This is the prepuce, or the covering for the clitoris. It is formed by the meeting of the labia minora over the clitoris. Its purpose is to protect the clitoris from damage.”

“When any of these parts are cut or damaged, it severely impairs a woman’s right to enjoyment of marital sexual relations, which are necessary for a joyful family life. Damage to these parts often results in massive bleeding, infection (including HIV), lifelong pain, incontinence, and even death from all of these complications. Additionally, damage to these parts puts a mother at a serious risk of dying in childbirth, and makes her child far more likely to die as well. Therefore, if we want our community to be one of healthy and happy families, we must eliminate the practice of FGC.”

“Now, we are going to see examples of the three different main types of FGC used in our community, and in communities across of Nigeria, and how they harm the female genitalia.”

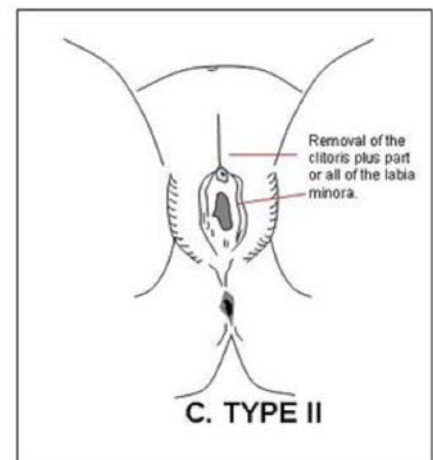
Picture B: FGC Type I

“This is a picture of the female genitalia when FGC Type I has been performed. FGC Type I is performed by cutting/damaging the prepuce, and then possibly damaging or removing the clitoris. As you can see in this picture, both the prepuce and the clitoris have been removed, and the labia majora may be sewn together to close off the top, forming scar tissue. In many cases, circumcisers attempt to remove only the prepuce, comparing the procedure to a male circumcision. Although the prepuce has similar nature to that of foreskin of the penis, its small size and attachment to the clitoris makes it difficult to remove without damaging the clitoris, unlike in male circumcision, where the foreskin can be removed without damaging the penis. Thus, it is nearly impossible, even for the most skilled circumcisers, to cut the prepuce without damaging the clitoris. A victim of FGC Type I will usually suffer from immense pain, massive bleeding, infection (including HIV), pain during sex, lack of sexual satisfaction, infertility, fistula (which means incontinence either of urine or feces), and problems in childbirth. One out of seven girls subjected to FGC Type I die as a result of the procedure, whether from infection or bleeding out during the process, or during childbirth.”



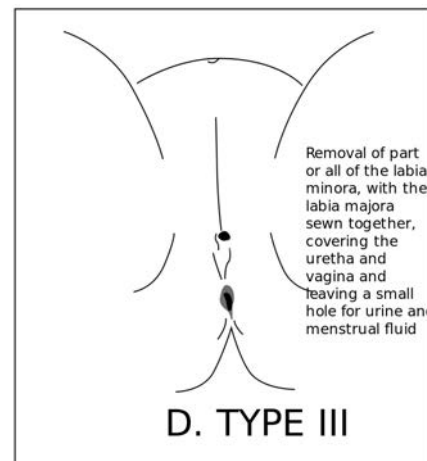
Picture C: FGC Type II

“In this picture, we see the genitalia of a girl or woman who has been subjected to FGC Type II. FGC Type II is performed by removing the clitoris with all or part of the labia minora. As we know from looking at the diagram of the healthy female genitalia, the labia minora (inner lips) have several important functions, including protecting the vagina from damage and germs and facilitating sexual intercourse (they are very sensitive and excitable, and produce a secretion that lubricates sexual intercourse, making it easier for penetration and more pleasurable for both parties). The victim of FGC Type II suffers from all the same effects as the victim of FGC Type I – except more severely. One out of three girls subjected to FGC Type II dies from complications of the procedure, whether from bleeding, infection, or in childbirth.”



Picture D: FGC Type III

“This picture shows the genitalia of a victim of FGC Type III, also known as ‘infibulation’. This is the worst type of FGC, and it is widely performed in the Afar, Somali, and Harari regions of Nigeria. In this type of FGC, all external sexual organs are removed, including the clitoris, labia minora (inner lips), and labia majora (outer lips). In addition, the remainder of the labia majora will be sewn together, leaving only a small hole for urine and menstruation. The girl or woman subjected to FGC Type III is left this way until her wedding day, when her scar is ripped open for sexual intercourse – she is then repaired, making her opening only large enough for the husband to penetrate her. She is re-opened during childbirth, and this is often a very painful, bloody, and fatal procedure. The victims of FGC Type III suffer from all the same effects as victims of the previous types of FGC, except to an even more severe degree, and with more of a risk for bleeding, shock, infection, and death in childbirth – their babies are far more likely to die as well. Research has shown that half of all girls who undergo FGC Type III die from complications directly related to the procedure, whether from bleeding, infection, or in childbirth.”



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Conclusion

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