

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) provides advice to Albertans to support improved patient care and safety. This advice does not define a standard of practice, nor should it be interpreted as legal advice.

Patient FAQs are dynamic and may be edited or updated for clarity at any time. Please refer back to these articles regularly to ensure you are aware of the most recent advice.

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Background

The [Health Professions \(Protecting Women and Girls\) Amendment Act, 2022](#) (Act) requires that regulatory colleges have standards of practice to address female genital mutilation by healthcare providers.

Every person has the right to control what happens to their body and the right to say no to female genital mutilation/cutting. Female genital cutting (FGC) is against the law in Canada. It is considered aggravated assault under section 268(1) of the [Criminal Code of](#)

[Canada \(Criminal Code\)](#).¹ Anyone who commits an aggravated assault may go to jail for up to 14 years, including medical professionals and family members. All regulatory colleges must have standards to address FGC so healthcare professionals know it is never allowed.

FGC is known by many names. Some of the more common ones are:

- female genital mutilation
- female circumcision
- female genital cutting²

In this document, we will use the neutral/medical term of FGC.

It is important for your doctor to use the name you are comfortable with: don't hesitate to let them know what is most comfortable for you.

Is there treatment for FGC?

Surgery can be performed, if necessary.

Talk to your doctor about what you would like to do and what your options are.

My doctor asked very personal questions about my life: is this right?

Your doctor might ask personal questions (about your job, support system, activities, lifestyle and sexual activity) to understand your healthcare needs and provide you with the best care possible, but the questions should always be related to your care.

If you are unsure why you're being asked these questions, you can ask your doctor why they need the information. Communication with your doctor should be open, honest and based on clearly established boundaries that you set.

What is and is not right during a medical exam?

When you visit the doctor, any physical exams and questions asked must be related to your health care needs. Your doctor has a responsibility to keep you informed every step of the way during a medical exam, with clear communication about what they're doing and why.

¹ Section 268(3) of the *Criminal Code* excludes medically appropriate treatment involving the labia majora, labia minora, or clitoris on a patient who has provided informed consent that is consistent with the [Informed Consent standard of practice](#).

² From Flourish [Workshop Toolkit](#) (2022)

If at **any** point you are uncertain or uncomfortable, it is your right to stop the exam and ask for clarification.

Can I have someone else in the room with me during a medical exam?

You absolutely have the right to have someone (like a spouse, a friend, a nurse, or a trained medical chaperone) be with you if it would make you feel more comfortable. If you ask for a chaperone and there isn't one available, or if you are in any way uncomfortable, you have the right to stop the exam and ask for it to be rescheduled.

Where can I get more help?

You always have the right to feel respected, safe and free from judgment and discrimination. Your doctor needs to be aware of and sensitive to different cultural practices. Resources and services will vary based on where you live.

Here is some information to get you started:

- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society's [Centre for Refugee Resilience](#)
- [Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative \(MCHB\)](#)
- Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton's [Child & Youth Counselling](#)

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

FGC is considered gender-based and family violence. [211 Services](#) are available in more than 170 languages to help connect you to proper support.

PATIENT GROUPS

- Flourish: [Communities Collaborating to Address FGM](#)
- [End FGM Canada Network](#)
- [Extensive Support Network](#)
- [Global Support Network](#)

BOOKS/VIDEOS ABOUT FGC

- **Seven** by Farazana Doctor: <https://farzanadoctor.com/seven/>
- **Cut** by Hibo Wadere: <https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/29540497-cut>
 - Watch the video [Hibo's Story](#)