



College Statement of Policy

As issued by the College Executive Board

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Female genital mutilation (FGM), sometimes annotated as female genital cutting or female circumcision, is described by the World Health Organization (WHO) as comprising “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitals, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons”^(1,2). Although these procedures are more commonly performed in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, it is estimated that more than 513,000 girls and women in the U.S. have experienced or are at risk of FGM^(3,4). Women may arrive in the U.S. having already had the procedure performed, but there are reports of these procedures being performed in immigrant populations by traditional practitioners, or girls being sent to the family’s home country to have the procedures performed.

Female genital mutilation is internationally recognized as a human rights violation and is considered an extreme form of discrimination against women^(1,2). According to U.S. federal law (18 U.S. Code § 116), it is illegal to perform FGM in the U.S. on anyone under the age of 18 years; it is also illegal to knowingly transport a girl out of the U.S. for the purpose of having FGM performed. Many state laws also prohibit FGM on minors, and some states prohibit the practice on adult women. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists condemns the practice of FGM and supports all efforts to eliminate the practice of FGM in the U.S. as well as internationally. This position is aligned with those of the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Family Physicians^(1,2,5,6).

¹ World Health Organization. Female genital mutilation. Fact sheets. Geneva: WHO; 2018. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>. Retrieved March 29, 2019.

² World Health Organization. WHO guidelines on the management of health complications from female genital mutilation. Geneva: WHO; 2016. Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/management-health-complications-fgm/en/>. Retrieved March 29, 2019.

³ Goldberg H, Stupp P, Okoroh E, Besera G, Goodman D, Danel I. Female genital mutilation/cutting in the United States: updated estimates of women and girls at risk, 2012. *Public Health Rep* 2016;131:340-7. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4765983/pdf/phr131000340.pdf>. Retrieved March 29, 2019.

⁴ Office on Women’s Health. Female genital mutilation or cutting. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018. Available at: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/female-genital-cutting>. Retrieved March 29, 2019.

⁵ American Medical Association. Expansion of AMA policy on female genital mutilation H-525.980. Chicago (IL): AMA; 2017. Available at: <https://policysearch.ama-assn.org/policyfinder/detail/female%20genital%20mutilation?uri=%2FAMADoc%2FHOD.xml-0-4716.xml>. Retrieved March 29, 2019.

⁶ American Academy of Family Physicians. Female genital mutilation. Leawood (KS): AAFP; 2015. Available at: <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/genital-mutilation.html>. Retrieved March 29, 2019.

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