

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINE

Female genital mutilation

How to protect an adult patient

Toolkit guide 6

February 2020

Female genital mutilation is a criminal offence. This term is defined as the partial or total removal of external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. In France, it is prohibited by law, even in cases where mutilation is committed outside the country.

IN CASES OF RISK OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

It is recommended to refer the patient to:

- the helpline number 3919 (“Violences femmes info” women’s aid helpline, freephone number);
- a specialist association;
- a member association of the France victimes network;
- a women’s and family rights information centre (CIDFF).

For emergency accommodation, it is recommended to call 115 and refer the patient to the social worker for her local municipality.

In the case of an **imminent risk** of mutilation for an adult women, assistance measures for at-risk women come into play. It is commended to call 17.

The practitioner should note that they cannot make a report to the authorities without the patient’s consent (unlike minors).

IN CASES OF KNOWN MUTILATION

It is recommended to take the time to talk with the patient to record her wishes and needs with a view to offering her, if she so wishes, multidisciplinary care (gynaecological, urological, obstetric, surgical, psychological, social).

There are a number of possible choices:

- another appointment to see the patient again to continue discussing matters;
- gynaecological follow-up by gynaecology-obstetrics, surgery, and medico-psychosocial units for multidisciplinary care;
- psychological management: refer patients with disorders such as anxiety, anguish, depression, post-traumatic stress syndrome, etc. to a psychiatrist or a psychologist;
- sex therapy follow-up with a view to assessing the repercussions of mutilation on the patient's sexuality and the effects on sexual desire and pleasure;
- contact with an association or an institution that organises group therapy around these issues.

When to make a report

Female genital mutilation is an offence punishable by 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of €150,000 as per the French Penal Code.

The professional should note that:

- if the adult patient is able to protect herself because of her age, or physical or psychological state, there is no obligation to make a report. The professional cannot make a report to the authorities without the patient's consent (unlike minors);
- if the patient "is unable to protect themselves because of their age, or physical or psychological state", there is an obligation to make a report¹.

Any woman who has been mutilated while a minor is entitled to file a report up to 30 years after reaching legal age, i.e. until she is 48 years of age.

It is recommended to:

- inform the victim of her rights;
- refer her to:
 - a victims' aid association accredited by the French Ministry of Justice, capable of guiding her throughout the judicial process,
 - a women's and family rights information centre (CIDFF),
 - the helpline number 3919,
 - or the helpline number 116 006 (victims' aid helpline),
 - or a specialist association who can guide her in filing a report;
- screen for other forms of abuse. Women who are victims of female genital mutilation are at an increased risk of being victims of other forms of abuse (domestic abuse within a relationship or family, sexual abuse, forced marriage);
- systematically question the woman about the abuse to which she has been subjected in order to screen for the abuse and refer her for protection and appropriate care.

1. Article 226-14 of the French Penal Code expressly stipulates that professional secrecy is waived for "a person who informs a judicial, medical or administrative authority" on grounds of female genital mutilation.

RESOURCES

- Groupe pour l'abolition des mutilations sexuelles (Group for the abolition of genital mutilation - GAMS)
federationgams.org/contacts
- Commission pour l'abolition des mutilations sexuelles (Commission for the abolition of genital mutilation - CAMS)
www.cams-fgm.org
- Excision, parlons-en !
www.excisionparlonsen.org
- Gynécologie sans frontières (GSF)
gynsf.org
- Mouvement français pour le planning familial (French family planning movement - MFPPF)
www.planning-familial.org/fr
- Institut Women-Safe (78) www.women-safe.org
- The campaign for prevention and protection of French teenage girls. Alerte Excision
www.alerte-excision.org
- Stop violences-femmes.gouv
stop-violences-femmes.gouv.fr
- Practitioners encountering cases of female genital mutilation (in French)
ansfl.org/document/guide-le-praticien-face-aux-mutilations-sexuelles-feminines
- The guidance document from the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research
“Sexist behaviour and sexual violence: prevention, detection, action” (in French)
cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/11_Novembre/02/9/Violences_sexuelles_Guide-PDF_2014_Canope_370029.pdf
- Santé publique France - Practical guide
“Migrants/foreign nationals of precarious status, medico-psycho-social management” (in French)
inpes.santepubliquefrance.fr/CFESBases/catalogue/pdf/1663.pdf
- Webchat service for reporting sexual and gender-based violence
www.service-public.fr/cmi



Violences Femmes Info women's aid helpline – 3919

- Helpline providing advice and guidance for female victims of abuse, as well as witnesses of abuse committed to women.
- This service deals with all kinds of physical, verbal or psychological abuse, in the home or workplace (including sexual harassment, assault and battery, and rape).
- It does not deal with emergency cases (it is not a police force or office).
- Calls are free of charge (from landlines or mobiles) and anonymous (not featured in telephone bills).
- Open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and



116 006: Victims' aid helpline

- Freephone number, open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Respecting the caller's anonymity, this helpline listens to victims and refers them to victims' aid association networks and

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