



# Circumcision of girls and women



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This brochure discusses circumcision of girls and women. Circumcision is made for cultural reasons. In a circumcision, the external genitals are harmed in some way. A circumcision may cause many health hazards. <sup>(1)</sup>

Circumcisions were brought to Finland by immigrants. Immigrants in Finland have started to oppose circumcision more and more. <sup>(2)</sup>

## **Why are people circumcised?**

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People justify circumcision with reasons related to culture, customs and cleanliness. They believe that a circumcised woman is cleaner. <sup>(4)</sup> However, this is not true for women's health. During menstruation, the blood may not be able to fully leave the body. This may cause infections. <sup>(3)</sup>

In some cultures, circumcision is seen as a symbol of womanhood and fertility. Body parts seen as male are removed in a circumcision. <sup>(5)</sup>

## **Legislation**

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Finland has laws that define circumcision as a crime. The Criminal Code sees circumcision as an assault. <sup>(7)</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child forbids hurting and assaulting children. <sup>(8)</sup>

Women have the right to self-determination. That means the women have the free choice of their own acts and body. Circumcision may violate the right to self-determination. <sup>(9)</sup>

## Harmful effects of circumcision

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### Long-term effects <sup>(3)</sup>:

- pain during sexual intercourse
- menstrual cramps
- infertility
- long-lasting infections
- urinating problems

### Immediate effects <sup>(3)</sup>:

- pain
- bleeding
- shock
- broken bones
- injections
- death

### Harmful effects related to childbirth <sup>(2)</sup> :

- fear of childbirth
- tearing
- long pushing stage
- infections transmitted from mother to child
- incisions during childbirth
- difficult to monitor the progress of childbirth <sup>(3)</sup>

## Reconstructive surgery

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In recent years, reconstructive surgeries have become common. They are meant to improve the woman's sexuality. They are also meant to fix damage caused by circumcision. <sup>(2)</sup>

The goal of the surgery is to make the genitals work the way they used to before the circumcision. The surgery also makes the genitals look normal again. <sup>(6)</sup>

**There are more than 200 million circumcised women in the world.**<sup>(2)</sup>

**The percentage of circumcised women is the largest in these countries:**

**SOMALIA 98 %**  
**EGYPT 87 %**  
**SUDAN 87 %**  
**ERITREA 83 %**

In addition, circumcisions are often made in other African countries and in the Middle East. <sup>(2)</sup>

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