



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. ⁽¹⁾

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

Why are people circumcised?

People justify circumcision with reasons related to culture, customs and cleanliness. They believe that a circumcised woman is cleaner. ⁽⁴⁾ 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. ⁽³⁾

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

Legislation

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

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

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. ⁽⁹⁾

Harmful effects of circumcision

Long-term effects ⁽³⁾:

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

Immediate effects ⁽³⁾:

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

Harmful effects related to childbirth ⁽²⁾ :

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

Reconstructive surgery

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. ⁽²⁾

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. ⁽⁶⁾

There are more than 200 million circumcised women in the world.⁽²⁾

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. ⁽²⁾

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