



Are you a boy

and have questions
about female circumcision?



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What is female circumcision?

Female circumcision covers different procedures where parts of girls' genitalia are damaged or removed. There are two main types:

- 1) A procedure where all or part of the clitoris is removed. Often, the labia minora (inner lips) are also removed. This can be compared to the removal of boys' penis head. The procedure is often called «sunna».
- 2) A procedure where the labia are cut or scraped so that they grow together and close the genital area. This is called infibulation.

Both types are more extensive and dangerous than male circumcision, where the penis' foreskin is removed.

Is it dangerous?

Yes. All types of female circumcision damage or disrupt the function of the sexual organs. It is dangerous and causes severe pain. Some even die. Many suffer infections. Many experience physical and mental problems for the rest of their lives. Pain, infections and cysts can occur. Some have difficulties getting pregnant. Giving birth becomes more painful and dangerous. Some babies are born dead because their mothers were circumcised. With infibulation, many have problems with urination or their periods. They must have an opening surgery before childbirth.



Is female circumcision necessary?

The female body is perfect the way it is. Nothing needs to be removed. Some believe that girls become more moral if they are circumcised. This is not correct. Circumcision does not affect girls' sexual morality or behavior. Circumcision is a cultural practice and cultural practices change all the time. You can help by rejecting the practice. No religion calls for female circumcision.

Is female circumcision prohibited?

All types of female circumcision are prohibited in Norway. It is illegal for all Norwegian residents whether or not they travelled to another country to have it done. Also, almost all countries where female circumcision is practiced have laws against the practice.

Is it true that female circumcision is no longer common?

It is becoming less common in many countries. But still three million girls are circumcised every year.



Can I ask a girl if she is circumcised?

The genital area is private. Most people do not talk to anyone about it, but perhaps they can talk to their very close friends or boyfriends. Those who want to have a sexual relationship should discuss it.

How to tell whether a girl is circumcised?

It is not possible for others to tell whether a girl is circumcised or not if she is wearing clothes. One can only know if she herself lets you know or you are naked together.

Do circumcised girls enjoy sex?

The whole body is sensitive to sexual enjoyment, not just in the genital area. It may be particularly important to caress the entire body if the clitoris is damaged. It is also essential that she does not feel pain. For a girl to enjoy sex, it is important that she feels desire, feels safe and that the couple spends enough time together to get to know each other's bodies.

Can a girl get pregnant despite being infibulated?

Yes.





What should boys consider if they will have sex with a girl who has been circumcised?

Sex is voluntary. Spend sufficient time together to get familiar with both yours and your partner's body. Build trust. Then both of you can enjoy each other and have a good sexual relationship. If both of you have the desire and want it, you can also have intercourse. If a girl is circumcised, it is particularly important to be cautious of any potential pain or fear of pain, since her genital area might be oversensitive to pain.

How old must you be to have sex?

The age of consent in Norway is 16 years. The age limit is set to ensure that adults do not have sex with those under 16, and that children and adolescents do not have their sexual debut before they are ready for it, both mentally and physically.



Can sex cause pain?

Circumcision may cause damage that makes sexual interaction painful. For infibulated girls it is impossible to have a painless intercourse unless they have had an opening operation and their wounds have healed. If a girl feels pain or is afraid of possible pain during sexual intercourse and interaction, she can seek help and advice from a doctor or a nurse.

How to open infibulation?

All major hospitals offer opening operations. The surgery is an outpatient procedure and the girl can go home the same day. Such operations do not damage the hymen.



This brochure has been prepared by the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS), in collaboration with the school health services at Sogn High School and an advisor on minorities from IMDI.

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