

Revision Surgery For Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting

Information leaflet



You have been offered revision surgery following previous female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C). Unfortunately, surgery does not generally restore the anatomy to its original state, but it may improve some symptoms you have.

This leaflet explains what the surgery involves, why it is being offered to you, and what to expect before and after the procedure. You will be offered an interpreter at your clinic and hospital visits. Please ask questions.

What is female genital mutilation/cutting?

- Any practice that purposely alters or injures the female genital organs for non-medical reasons, including
 - » Removal of parts or all of the external female genitalia
 - » Cutting in the genital area
 - » Closing or reducing the size of the vaginal opening
 - » Sometimes referred to as female circumcision.
- There are different types of FGM/C which lead to a range of symptoms and complications. Your doctor, nurse or midwife can answer any questions you have about the type of FGM/C you have experienced.
- Women may experience long-term physical and/or emotional effects.
- FGM/C causes harm and has no health benefits, and is a human rights violation of women and girls.

What is Revision Surgery

Revision surgery aims to

- » Improve physical comfort and address pain, scarring or tightness
- » Restore anatomy where possible (e.g. opening the entrance to the vagina)
- » Improve sexual function
- » Help with urinary or menstrual difficulties
- » Make vaginal childbirth more straightforward

The exact procedure will depend on your individual needs and the type of FGM/C previously performed. Physiotherapy may also be helpful -either before or after the procedure.

What types of surgery are available

Depending on the type of FGM/C and your needs, surgery may include

1. Deinfibulation

- Opening scar tissue that narrows the vaginal opening
- Can help with menstruation, sex, bladder symptoms and childbirth

2. Clitoral identification

- Attempts to uncover remaining clitoral tissue
- Aims to improve sensitivity and sexual comfort

3. Scar revision

- Reduces painful scar tissue
- May improve comfort

What are the possible benefits of this surgery

Some women report

- » Reduced pain or discomfort
- » Improved ability to have sexual intercourse
- » Reduced problems passing urine, or with recurrent infections
- » Emotional or psychological healing
- » A reduced need for interventions and stitches at vaginal childbirth

Results vary and improvement is not guaranteed, take time to discuss your symptoms and expectations with your medical team.

What are the risks of this surgery?

All surgeries carry risks, these include

- » Pain and swelling
- » Bleeding
- » Infection
- » Scarring
- » No improvement in symptoms
- » Reduced or altered sensation

What happens before surgery

Before the procedure, you will

- Meet with a specialist doctor (you may want a few clinic visits before you are happy to proceed with surgery)
- Have a physical examination
- Discuss your symptoms and expectations, ask questions!
- Be offered psychological support if needed (<https://www.ifpa.ie/get-care/free-fgm-treatment-service/>)
- Be given a date for surgery (there is a waiting list)
- Discuss and sign informed consent with the doctor performing or assisting in the procedure, the procedure/risks/benefits/alternative options of treatments will be explained to you
- Receive instructions about eating, drinking and medications on the day of surgery
- Be given any other pre-operative instructions due to other healthcare issues you may have (eg any other clinics you need to attend before the procedure)

You will have the opportunity to ask any questions

What happens on the day of the procedure?

On the day of the procedure, you will

- Be fasting (no food or fluids after a certain time)
- Be admitted to the day ward by a team of nurses and doctors

What happens during the surgery

- It is usually performed in the operating theatre under general anaesthetic (occasionally it can be done under local anaesthetic depending on circumstances)
- Usually a day case (you go home that evening), but some people have to stay overnight. If you live too far away or live on your own make sure you tell your team – they can arrange for you to stay overnight
- Takes about 30 minutes (depending on your case, your doctor can tell you how long to expect)
- May involve releasing scar tissue as seen in the image provided below
- Any stitches used will be dissolvable; you will not need to have them removed

Your surgeon will explain exactly what will be done in your case



What happens after the surgery

- You will likely go home on the same day of the procedure after eating, drinking and passing urine
- If you live too far away or live on your own, make sure you tell your team – they can arrange for you to stay in hospital overnight.
- You may have discomfort for a few weeks, you will be given advice about pain relief
- You will be advised on hygiene and wound care, if you have stitches you should gently wash and dry the area morning and evening for the first week. Sometimes you will be advised to gently stretch each side of the vulva to make sure further scarring does not develop.
- Avoid vaginal sex and until the area has healed and you feel comfortable.
- You will be reviewed in the perineal clinic 6 to 8 weeks after the procedure, but contact the emergency room before that if you have any concerns.

Follow-up appointments are important to monitor healing.

When to seek help after the surgery

Contact your healthcare provider if you have

- Fever
- Increasing pain
- Bleeding or discharge
- Concerns about healing

Are there alternatives to surgery

Yes. Many women benefit from non-surgical care, including:

- Psychosexual therapy
- Pain management
- Pelvic floor physiotherapy
- Education about anatomy, skin care and sexual health

These options may be offered before or instead of surgery

Making your decision

Choosing surgery is personal. It is important to

- Understand the benefits and risks
- Consider the timing of this (eg fitting in with study and work)
- Know that results are not guaranteed
- Take time to ask questions
- Consider psychological support

Confidentiality and support

- Your care is confidential, we will only share information with other health care professionals involved in your care, such as the doctor who referred you.
- You will be treated with dignity and respect
- Support services are available before and after surgery, see below for more details

You can learn more about this and FGM here:

1. Irish Family Planning Association

- » <https://www.ifpa.ie/get-care/free-fgm-treatment-service/>
- » Phone number: **01 872 7088** or **08184955051**
- » Confidential phoneline: **085 877 1342**

2. AkiDwa

- » Provides essential psychosocial, peer, and culturally appropriate support for women affected by FGM, complementing medical care as part of a holistic approach.
- » Akidwa, akidwa.ie
- » Email: info@akidwa.ie
- » Phone number: **01 834 9851**

3. IFRAH Foundation

- » <https://ifrahfoundation.org/>

Other useful supports:

1. Physiotherapy at Rotunda Hospital, <https://rotunda.ie/physio/#gynaebaby>
2. Mental Health at Rotunda Hospital, <https://rotunda.ie/mental-health/>
3. Perineal Clinic at Rotunda Hospital, <https://rotunda.ie/knowledgebase/perineal-clinic/>
4. HSE website, <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/female-genital-mutilation/pregnancy/>

Your Surgery is booked for:

Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

- If you need to change this please contact **01 8171700** Ext **1396** (theatre secretary) or email theatreadmin@ROTUNDA.ie.
- If you need another clinic appointment before your surgery, please email mopdappointments@ROTUNDA.ie.
- Sometimes dates and times of scheduled surgery have to be changed by the hospital, please make sure we have your up to date contact details.