

A woman with OBF usually isolates herself from social gatherings

Can OBF be prevented?

YES! OBF can certainly be prevented by the following steps:

1. A pregnant woman should seek antenatal care throughout pregnancy
2. A pregnant woman should seek medical help as soon as labour starts and make sure her baby is delivered by a skilled birth attendant. Health care providers should facilitate access to Emergency obstetric care where necessary.

If I have OBF, what should I do?

Please talk to your Midwife, Nurse or Doctor for guidance on what should be done if you have Obstetric fistula.

Some women try to use herbs and other remedies to treat OBF. This is not a helpful practice as OBF cannot be cured by such means. Appropriate help is available.

How is OBF treated?

OBF can be repaired through surgery, which yields a success rate of over 80% when carried out by a trained provider with the proper medical equipment. However, some complicated forms of OBF may require more than one surgery to successfully repair the fistula. OBF is usually repaired by a trained surgeon.

Where can fistula be treated?

Currently, there are two main hospitals in Ghana which offer dedicated OBF care. These hospitals are:

- Mercy Women's Catholic Hospital, Mankessim- Central Region
- Tamale Fistula Center, Tamale Central Hospital- Northern Region

Other hospitals include:

- Upper East Regional Hospital
- Upper West Regional Hospital
- Tamale Teaching Hospital
- Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital
- Korle Bu Teaching Hospital
- Some District Hospitals

How much does it cost to have an OBF repaired?

The cost of one fistula surgery is about the cedi equivalent of 400-500 USD. This is however covered by the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS).

There may be additional costs including feeding whilst on admission. For more information please talk to your Midwife, Nurse or Doctor.

A woman with Obstetric fistula (OBF) must report to a hospital as soon as the fistula is noticed and should not try to manage it at home



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ALL THE FACTS

*you need to know about
obstetric Fistula (OBF)*

Obstetric Fistula (OBF)

What is OBF?

OBF occurs when there is an abnormal hole between the vagina, rectum, and/or bladder, following prolonged labour during childbirth. This causes the woman to leak either urine or faeces or both.

OBF is a global problem and this is why the UN has set aside 23rd May of every year as an international day for the elimination of fistula.

How common is OBF in Ghana?

Between January 2011 and June 2014, a total of 1,538 cases of OBF were seen in health facilities all over Ghana. Women with OBF can be found in all ten regions; however, most OBF patients live in the Northern, Ashanti, Western, Central and the Upper regions.

Research indicates that there will be approximately 1,300 new cases of OBF in Ghana each year.

Obstetric Fistula (OBF)

What is known about OBF patients in Ghana?

Recently (2014-2015), an assessment of OBF was commissioned by the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). About 560 OBF patient data was obtained and analyzed. The following statistics about OBF in Ghana was reported:

- 53% of OBF patients were married
- 35% had at least primary school level education

- The average age at both first marriage and first delivery was about 21 years
- The majority of OBF patients were employed - farming (38%), trading (43%).
- All OBF patients had been pregnant at least once
- Of all fistulae in women, 92% occurred after delivery
- Women with OBF had lived with the condition ranging from two weeks to 40 years
- Majority of OBF patients (80%) said that they felt helpless about their condition due to lack of information
- About half of the OBF patients felt rejected or shunned by their families
- At first attempt at repair, eight out of ten OBF patients were successfully cured

Burden of OBF on a woman's life

OBF has devastating physical, social, economic, emotional and psychological consequences for a woman's life.

Physical Consequences

Many women who develop OBF suffer a chronic skin condition which is caused by the direct irritation of urine. Some patients develop blisters and sores around their thighs caused by the constant urinary incontinence and friction.

Social & Economic Consequences

OBF is considered a "social calamity" in most parts of Africa. Many women who suffer this condition are unable to work outside the home or farm, thereby being unable to generate income. They are mostly shunned by their husbands, families and communities.

Obstetric fistula (OBF) is curable. If you are a woman with OBF, don't be shy, seek medical attention NOW... and get the relief you deserve

Emotional & Psychological Consequences

Eight out of 10 women who develop OBF lose their babies from the delivery which caused the fistula. This situation is worsened by the fact that OBF patients often become isolated from their families. Many women with OBF also lose their self-esteem and are easily depressed because of their helplessness.

Some truths about OBF

- It is NOT a consequence of sexually transmitted disease
- It is NOT infectious or transferrable
- It is NOT a curse or a punishment from the gods
- It is NOT as a result of infidelity or witchcraft
- It is a CURABLE condition

OBF - what to look out for

One cannot easily tell if a woman has OBF just by looking at her. The reason is because women with OBF often adopt various ways of coping with the condition. These coping strategies include eating and drinking very little so that they will not leak too much urine. They keep themselves generally clean by bathing regularly, using perfume and powder to mask the offensive smell, putting calamine lotion on the blisters and sores around their thighs, and using old pieces of cloth as diapers.