

Health without borders

Information on the Italian National Health Service for
non communitarian citizens (non-UE citizens)

english





GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

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Non EU citizens with a valid residence visa, and their dependent family members legally residing in Italy, have the right to be registered in the National Health Service (SSN) with treatment, fees

and assistance equal to Italian Citizens.

SSN registration can be compulsory or on a voluntary basis and it is valid until the residence permit validity expires.

Integration Agreement

Since March 10th 2012 any foreigner entering Italy for the first time, by applying for a residence permit with validity exceeding a year, accepts and subscribes to an integration agreement with the Italian State. This agreement is valid for two years and it is subdivided into credits.

The Single Contact Point for

Immigration (Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione) deals with the subscription of the agreement in cases of work immigration or family reconnection and of the subsequent management. With the registration in the National Health Service and the choice of the family doctor you are granted 4 credit points.

Free Compulsory Registration

Foreign Citizens who qualify with the conditions and prerequisites required by current law have the right to free compulsory registration to the National Health Service. Free Compulsory Registration also called Registration by law, is guaranteed to residents for work, family, international protection. Awaiting citizenship, custody of minors or adoption. In more detail, types of residence visas which give the right to Compulsory Registration into the National Health Service are:

- ✓ Work when you are self employed or working for an employer (even

- casual work), enrolment at the Employment Centre (Centri per l'impiego) waiting for employment
- ✓ Family reasons, coesione familiare, ricongiungimento familiare (with exception of parents over the age of 65 reunited with a legally resident foreign citizen who are entitled to voluntary enrolment)
- ✓ Application for International protection and Dublin Convention
- ✓ Refugee Status (or political asylum)
- ✓ Auxiliary protection
- ✓ Humanitarian protection (which can be given for age or health related issues; serious political



instability situations; violence episodes or lack of respect of human rights, starvation or natural disasters etc.)

- ✓ Awaiting adoption (in such a case the minor is not given any residency document, but still has the same rights as Italian minors)
- ✓ Custody
- ✓ A minor residing for health or care necessity
- ✓ Medical support and care to pregnant women and for child bearing women up to six months after the birth.
- ✓ Health, in the case of foreign citizens who have received an extension of the residence permit for disease or occupational injury
- ✓ Imprisonment or confinement

Voluntary Registration

Non communitarian residents holding a residence visa valid for more than three months (which does not give the right to the Free Compulsory Registration in the National Health Service) can apply for the Voluntary registration, a list of these people includes:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Au pairs
- ✓ Religious Personnel
- ✓ Residence visa holders for elective

- ✓ Acquisition of citizenship

PLEASE NOTE

Italian Law defines that Health is a fundamental right of Individuals.

Foreign citizens legally residing in Italy have the right to be equally treated and enjoy full equality and the same rights as Italian citizens. Registration in the National Health Service (SSN) gives the same rights to full health assistance and equal conditions, as Italian citizens.

residence

- ✓ Over 65 years old reunited parents
- ✓ Foreign employee of international organizations active in Italy, without prejudice to international agreements on the subject
- ✓ Credited diplomatic personnel and consulate offices
- ✓ Workers who do not have to pay income taxes to the Italian tax system
- ✓ Voluntary programmes for foreign



- workers
- ✓ Researchers residing for research programmes
 - ✓ Others not entitled for compulsory registration holding a residence permit of three months validity

Voluntary Registration is subjected to an annual fee which could be extended to dependent members of the family; the time period refers to a solar year (from the 1st of January to the 31st of December) and the fee cannot be paid in instalments.

Which is the Local Health Authority Office (ASL) where I have to apply for SSN registration?

SSN Registration has to be requested in the place where you are living, at the local ASL in the county where you are registered as a resident, or if you are not still a registered resident, which is intended to be the address indicated on your Residence Permit.

Students and individuals working as au pairs can register on a voluntary basis to the SSN even if they are to reside in Italy for a period less than three months.

They are entitled to a reduced set fee and to apply for the registration for a period of time less than an year.

Note: To extend the registration

to dependent family members, students and au pair workers must pay the full cost of the set fee. Residents for medical care reasons as stated in art. 36 of the Testo Unico (for those who have entered Italy with a regular Residence visa for medical cures) cannot be registered in the SSN.

For an individual reunited with a foreign citizen legally residing in Italy, voluntary registration is provided.

The registration fee is calculated on a set fee basis for residing students and au Pair workers.



The Italian National Health Service (SSN)

SSN is the acronym usually adopted to indicate the Italian Health Service in other words the public Health System. Individuals have to register with the SSN to access public health care. Registration with the SSN has to be done with the local ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale , Local Health Authority Office) which is found locally in your place of residence or where you are staying; the application is usually made at an office called “Scelta o Revoca del Medico” (Choosing and changing of the the Family Doctor). In the same office you will find the list of available doctors from which you should choose your family doctor/ the

Health Card

A Health Card is a document provided to individuals after registration with SSN and gives you access to the health care services of the Italian System. On the card there is your identification code, your name and your family doctor’s name. Your Health Card is valid until your Residence visa expires. To extend validity you will have to provide evidence to ASL of a residence visa renewal application.

paediatrician for your children. The office staff will issue you with a Health Card which has the same validity as your Residence Permit.

PLEASE NOTE

you will have to show your Residence visa and fiscal code. The Health Card must be requested directly by the registering individual, or by another person on their behalf together with a copy of the applicant’s ID card and a declaration by the applicant stating the name and personal details of the person who is doing it on their behalf.

If you lose your Health Card you can request a duplicate providing your ID document and self declaration certificate (stating the loss of the Card) or a copy of report to the relevant authorities (i.e. Police ,Carabinieri)

Note: You can only access healthcare when you present your Health Card



Sei in attesa di rilascio del tuo primo permesso di soggiorno per lavoro subordinato o per motivi familiari?

Puoi iscriverti di diritto al SSN sulla base della documentazione attestante

l'avvenuta richiesta del permesso di soggiorno.

Se sei già iscritto di diritto al SSN e sei in attesa di rinnovo di permesso di soggiorno, conservi l'iscrizione.

Choosing a General Practitioner and/ or Paediatrician

Registration with the SSN gives you the right to choose a GP (Family doctor) and/ or a Paediatrician for your children up to the age of 14 who have valid Residence permits.

These physicians guarantee free

surgery appointments and home visits, pharmacy prescriptions and Specialist appointments.

You can change family doctor and paediatrician at any time.

I have received my Health card with chip. Does this replace the original paper Health card?

The Health card with chip does **not** replace the paper Health card, which

must be kept safely as it gives details of your family doctor or paediatrician and exemptions of payments of prescriptions (ticket) if any.

Your Family Doctor

Anyone who has registered with the SSN has the right to have a Family doctor (medico di famiglia), also called a General Practitioner (medico di base o medico generico)

You can choose a Family doctor at any Local Health Authority office where you have residence (or where you are living) and register with the SSN consulting the list of doctors available in the area.

For children up to the age of 14 you must choose a paediatrician in the same way as a family doctor. A GP and

paediatrician are fundamental for healthcare: their job is to treat patients in the most appropriate way.

You can change family doctor and paediatrician at any time.

Every family doctor and paediatrician chosen through the SSN have a surgery where free appointments for general medicine treatment can be made within the surgery opening hours. You should also contact your doctor's surgery for the following:

- ✓ Sick notes if you are employed



- ✓ Certificates for readmission to school
- ✓ Specialist appointments and diagnostic checks
- ✓ Requests for non urgent stays in

Home Visits

If necessary your family doctor or paediatrician can make a home visit when the patient is too seriously ill to

hospital

- ✓ Requests for hot spring bath treatments (cure termali)
- ✓ Medicine prescriptions

get to the doctor's surgery.

All of these services are free.

Emergency Medical Care / Doctor-on-Call (La guardia medica)

You can call this free healthcare service for urgent matters only when you are unable to contact your own family doctor or paediatrician. This service is only available during the night, at weekends or public holidays. On calling the emergency number a doctor will give you advice on what to do and if necessary will make a home visit. After any checks or treatment the doctor can prescribe medicine,

give you a sick note and suggest admittance to hospital.

PLEASE NOTE

The Emergency medical care telephone number is different in each city. Please always consult the local telephone directory.

Medicines

All medicine prescribed by your doctor can be obtained at any pharmacy. Some medicines categorised as "life saving" (salva-vita) are free or require a minimal contribution (il ticket). Medicine not subsidised by the SSN however must be paid for in full. Pharmacies also sell "over-the-counter medicine" (OTC) also called "farmaci da banco"

that can be paid for without the need of a prescription (but without a prescription the full price will have to be paid). In your area there is a rota so you will always find an "after hours" pharmacy open even during the night, at weekends and public holidays. All pharmacies display details of this particular pharmacy operating in the area.



Specialist Medical Examinations and Lab Tests

To obtain an appointment to see a Specialist or to have Radiology/ Lab tests you need to see your doctor or paediatrician who will give you the necessary medical request. Usually, Specialist appointments and general hospital appointments must be made by presenting the medical request and health card at the payment counter at the hospital or appropriate clinic where you will have the test or by

contacting the main Appointments Office (CUP-*Centro Unico per le Prenotazioni*)

For Specialist appointments you need to pay the medical fee (*il ticket*) except in special cases of exemption.

PLEASE RESPECT THE APPOINTMENT!

If you have to cancel or postpone it you should notify the relevant official or office immediately.

Hospitals

Hospitals in Italy can be public or private.

To be admitted to any hospital it is necessary to have a written request from your doctor unless you are admitted as an emergency.

The hospital expenses are covered by the SSN.

In public hospitals no request for payment will be made.

PLEASE NOTE

Hospital staff will inform you of all risks connected to surgery, anaesthetic etc and any other relevant alternatives to the treatment. Before undergoing any surgery you will be asked to sign a form of consent.

Emergency Healthcare (telephone number 118)

118 is a free, public, emergency healthcare service that operates 24 hours a day. This number should be called only in emergencies and it is a 24/7 free public service of rapid intervention for casualties that request immediate health care and assistance. The 118 service does not replace the Family Doctor or the activity of the Emergency medical care / Doctor-on-

call – Continuity assistance Service.

When you call 118 remember that you will have to :

- ✓ Clearly communicate name, surname and a telephone number
- ✓ Describe the type of emergency
- ✓ Specify the address to which the emergency unit should be sent: street, house number, place and any useful reference point.



Emergency Healthcare

In the case of an emergency (accident, injury, life threatening situations) you should go to Casualty/ Emergency of the nearest hospital:

At the hospital emergency room you will be assessed and treated.

PLEASE NOTE: Medical attention at the emergency room of the hospital will be given in order of arrival but also the seriousness of the symptoms observed by medical personnel of the reception and acceptance of the patients will be considered.

Emergency Room Access

The Emergency Services can be accessed autonomously or after a call to 118. By means of the TRIAGE system operators at the reception assign a priority colour code to ensure immediate assistance to those in life threatening conditions and to regulate the access to the emergency rooms according to the seriousness of the conditions as well as the time of arrival.

PLEASE NOTE

Casualty \ Emergency is a service only for emergencies. For all other types of medical attention, you should contact the family doctor (or the doctor-on-call during hours when the family doctor is not available).

Healthcare Fee (Ticket) Exemption

The Ticket is a contribution towards to healthcare costs. Everybody has to pay this fee except those who are exempt. The Ticket must be paid at the hospital payment counter or relevant hospital clinic before the date of the medical appointment. You may be exempt from payment if you have a disability, a chronic illness and are invalid, have a low income or are a young child who does not have to pay. For more information about Ticket

exemption and the issue of an exemption declaration or card you should go to the Exemption Office (Ufficio Esenzione) at your Local Health Authority Office (ASL).



I have a Residence/ Work permit (fixed term / part- time contract, self employed or casual work). Which documents do I have to present to register with the National Health Service (SSN)?

- ✓ Residence/ Work permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ V.A.T. number (tax code) or Social Security position (La partita IVA o la posizione INPS)
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, codice fiscale)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

(PLEASE NOTE: The Health card is valid only for the duration of your stay in Italy)

I came to Italy with a valid work residence visa in accordance with *decreto-flussi* (current immigration laws) and I am waiting for my first Residence/ Work permit to be issued.

Which documents do I have to present to register with the SSN?

- ✓ The receipt certifying your Residence/ Work Permit request
- ✓ A photocopy of the security clearance document issued by the General Immigration Office at the

Prefecture (*Sportello Unico in Prefettura*)

- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code) (*codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I possess a valid Residence permit to be self employed in Italy. Which documents do I have to present to register with the SSN?

- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ V:A:T: number (tax code) or Social Security position (*INPS*)
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I am enrolled at the Employment Centre(*Centro per l'Impiego*) and have a Residence permit awaiting a job position. Do I have the right to free registration with the SSN?
Yes. When you request the Health card you should present the following documents to the Local Health Authority Office (ASL)



- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of your permit request
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

If you have a low income and you would like to obtain the exemption card for non-payment of prescriptions/ medical fees (ticket) you have to enrol at the Employment Centre.

I have a Residence permit for family reasons. Which documents do I have to present to register with the SSN?

- ✓ The Residence Permit or the receipt certifying your Residence Permit request
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I am waiting for the issue of my first Residence Permit for family reunification.

Which documents do I have to present to register with the SSN?

- ✓ Identity card or passport

- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ A photocopy of the security clearance document issued by the General Immigration Office at the Prefecture (*Sportello Unico in Prefettura*)
- ✓ The receipt certifying your Residence Permit request
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

Which documents do I have to present for my parent, who is over 65 years of age and came to Italy with a residence visa for family reunification, to register with the SSN?

Your parent must pay a fee to enrol in the SSN. Your parent should present the following documents to the Local Health Authority Office (ASL)

- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of their permit request
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying their residence or a declaration of where they are staying
- ✓ Post Office receipt of payment for voluntary enrolment in the SSN (The Post Office payment slip (*bollettino postale*) can be obtained



directly from local Health Authority offices)

I have a valid Family Cohesion (*coesione familiare*) Residence Permit . Do I have the right to free registration with the SSN?

Yes, you should show the following documents to the local Health Authority Office (ASL):

- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I am a foreign parent with a valid Residence permit whose child under 18 years of age was born in Italy.

Which documents are necessary to register my child with the SSN?

- ✓ Birth certificate
- ✓ Child's National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)

If I have a Residence permit for Political / Humanitarian Asylum or Protection from persecution, what benefits am I entitled to in the SSN?

You have the right to free registration

in the SSN. To register you should show the following documents to the local Health Authority Office:

- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I have requested International Protection / Political Asylum in Italy. What benefits am I entitled to in the SSN?

You have the right to free registration in the SSN. To register you should show the following documents to the local Health Authority Office:

- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

Applicants seeking International Protection / Political Asylum are exempt from payment of medical prescriptions/fees (*pagamento del ticket*) up to six months after the initial date of application for Asylum has



been made. After seven months in Italy the applicant can look for work. In the case that the applicant cannot find work or becomes unemployed they must notify the authorities by enrolling themselves at the Employment Centre (*Iscrizione nelle liste del Centro per l'Impiego*).

If you have a low income and you would like to obtain the exemption **card for non-payment** of prescriptions/medical fees (ticket) you should make a request at a Local Health Authority Office (ASL).

I have a Residence permit to request Italian Citizenship. Which documents do I have to present to register in the SSN?

- ✓ Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I am the Guardian of a minor in possession of a Residence permit for minors.

Which documents are necessary to register the child in the SSN?

- ✓ The child's residence permit or the

receipt of issue of their permit request or permit renewal

- ✓ The child's Identity card or passport
- ✓ The child's National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents, signed by the Guardian, certifying their residence or a declaration of where they are staying

If the minor is waiting for the issue of their first Residence permit for minors it is also necessary to show a copy of the Custody Order (*decreto di affido*) or the Pre-Custody Order (*pre-affido*)

I have begun the adoption process to adopt a child (a minor) who is living with me at the moment. Which documents are necessary to register the child in the SSN?

✓ The adoption documents (*provvedimento di adozione*) or Pre-Adoption Custody Order (*affidamento pre-adottivo*)

✓ The child's Identity card or passport

✓ The child's National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)

✓ All documents, signed by the Guardian, certifying their residence or a declaration of where they are staying



I am the Guardian of a minor in possession of a Residence permit for Custody.

Which documents do I have to present to register the child in the SSN?

- ✓ The child's residence permit or the receipt of issue of their permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ The child's National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ The child's Identity card or passport
- ✓ All documents, signed by the Guardian, certifying their residence or a declaration of where they are staying

If the minor is waiting for the issue of their first Residence permit for Custody it is also necessary to show a copy of the Custody Order (*decreto di affido*) or the Pre-Custody Order (*provvedimento di affidamento pre-adottivo*).

Which documents are necessary to register a minor, who is undergoing treatment for psychophysical problems, with the SSN?

- ✓ All documents certifying temporary custody whilst the child is attending the treatment programme (applicable within solidarity programmes)

- ✓ The child's Identity card or passport
- ✓ The child's National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents, signed by the Guardian, certifying their residence or a declaration of where they are staying

I have a valid Residence permit for medical treatment during pregnancy.

Which documents do I have to present to register with the SSN?

- ✓ The Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ National Insurance Number (fiscal code, *codice fiscale*)
- ✓ Identity card or passport
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

Are foreign prisoners entitled to public health care?

All foreign prisoners, who have valid Residence documents, are entitled to free registration with the SSN for the period of their imprisonment. Prisoners in open prisons (*in semi-libertà*) and those serving other kinds of sentences are also entitled to free



registration with the SSN. Prisoners are exempt from the payment of medical fees (*il ticket*).

I have a valid Residence permit for the duration of a legal process I am involved in.

Can I register with the SSN?

You have the right to free registration with the SSN. To register you should show the following documents to the local Health Authority Office

- ✓ The Residence permit or the receipt of issue of your permit request or permit renewal
- ✓ National Insurance Number (Fiscal Code, *Codice fiscale*)
- ✓ All documents certifying your residence or a declaration of where you are staying

I have a valid Residence permit to study in Italy. Do I have the right to public health care?

You are entitled to voluntary enrolment in the SSN which has certain characteristics and requires payment of a set fee. There is a different cost for additional family members you are responsible for.

Please Note: If you are responsible for a family member who has the right to free compulsory registration in the SSN, you also have the right to free registration to SSN.

I am an *au-pair* (*lavoratrice domestica collocata alla pari*) with a valid Residence permit.

Do I have the right to public health care?

You are entitled to voluntary registration with the SSN which has certain characteristics and requires payment of a set fee. There is a different cost for additional family members you are responsible for.



Equal Opportunities for women from all over the world

Italian Law upholds the right for every woman, Italian or foreign, to health care, Financial and Social assistance, to psychological support and to equal work opportunities. The National Health Service- SSN assures

preventive healthcare, maternity benefits, child benefits, vaccinations, diagnosis and cure of infectious diseases. Italian Law upholds the right of maternity benefits.

Family Counselling Clinic-FCC (Il consultorio familiare)

This clinic offers free public health and social care services to all people. It has qualified staff at various levels and services include preventive healthcare, personal and social education, general healthcare and psychological support. It promotes the psychophysical health of women, couples, adolescents and children.

You can attend the clinic for any of the following matters:

- ✓ Contraception
- ✓ Pregnancy
- ✓ Support postnatal and with breastfeeding
- ✓ Children's vaccinations
- ✓ Abortion
- ✓ Advice on giving birth in anonymity
- ✓ Preventive care for tumours
- ✓ Emotional and sex education
- ✓ Eating disorders
- ✓ Family mediation for separation

and divorce

- ✓ Fertility/ infertility
- ✓ Custody and adoption
- ✓ Domestic violence and violence/ mistreatment against children
- ✓ Support for couples or families in impoverished social and economic conditions
- ✓ Psychological disturbances related to adolescence, pregnancy, motherhood etc
- ✓ Sexually transmitted diseases
- ✓ Menopause
- ✓ Legal advice

The clinic staff are specialised in areas such as gynaecology, psychology, obstetrics, healthcare, social care and legal matters. The clinic staff collaborate with hospitals and other regional entities such as schools, councils and associations)



Access to the Family Counselling Clinic is free and does not require a medical prescription. You can go to speak with a member of staff without an appointment and if necessary they will fix a further appointment

for a medical check-up. All services offered are free except some specialist gynaecological appointments which require payment of a medical fee (ticket).

Maternity Benefits

All women in Italy have the right to maternity benefits (before, during and after the pregnancy). If you think you are pregnant you can attend your doctor's surgery or the nearest Family Counselling Clinic where you can follow a specific care programme to help you during your pregnancy and up to the first few months after your baby is born.

The care programme includes:

Your Child

After giving birth, the obstetrician will give you a certificate of birth assistance. Take this certificate to the registry of births (Anagrafe) to register the birth of your child. The registration should be made within 10 days after the birth of your child at the appropriate Council office (Ufficio di stato civile del Comune) or within 3 days of the birth at the appropriate office at the hospital (Direzione

Vaccinations

Your child's health should be safeguarded at all times and vaccines are the most effective way to prevent

1. **Assistance during pregnancy:** obstetric checks, scans, general health checks, prenatal course, legal advice for those who work.
2. **Assistance during labour and birth:** advice and support during breastfeeding and the first few health checks for the newborn.
3. **Postnatal Assistance:** In particular postnatal checks.

sanitaria).

Up to the age of 6 your child is entitled to free specialist medical check ups, lab tests and other check-ups if you are on a certified income lower than what . (l'importo stabilito dalla legge).

If you are experiencing serious financial problems you should get help from the social services (assistente sociale).

infectious diseases. In Italy some vaccinations are compulsory by law: anti diphtheria, anti tetanus, anti



polio, anti hepatitis-B.

Other vaccinations are optional but strongly ad residence visable. You should visit your paediatrician for

more advice.

You can receive more information about compulsory vaccinations from the Family Counselling Clinic.

Registration of your newborn child with the SSN

One of the two parents, with means of identification, has to go to a Local Health Authority office (ASL) to self certify the child's personal details. The child will then be registered with the SSN and will receive a personal health code together with information of the paediatrician chosen from the list of physicians registered with ASL.

PLEASE NOTE

Any child who has already begun the vaccination programme in their country of origin can continue the programme in Italy at the local Family Counselling Clinic. It is advised to take the records certifying all vaccinations already done.

Abortion (L'interruzione volontaria della gravidanza-IVG)

PLEASE NOTE

The FCC offers support and advice to help overcome the causes for the decision to have an abortion. It offers psychological support, information of voluntary organisations and if necessary helps with the involvement of the social services.

Italian law declares that it is possible to have an abortion within 90 days of the first day of the woman's last menstruation cycle. If, after considering all other alternatives, you decide to go ahead you can visit the local Family Counselling Clinic (or your personal gynaecologist, family doctor or other specialist) where a gynaecologist will give you the necessary certificate to proceed with an abortion. You will then be referred to the hospital ward where the operation will take place.



I cannot keep my unborn child but I do not want an abortion. Italian law allows the mother to give birth anonymously (without having to declare any personal information or present any document) and to not acknowledge the child as her own but to allow the child to grow up with a family.

To give birth anonymously is not a criminal offence and the Police will not prosecute in any way. After

giving birth, the mother can leave the newborn child at the hospital and will have 10 days thereafter to acknowledge the baby as her own. If the mother does not make any acknowledgement the child will be placed for adoption and custody will be given to a family waiting to adopt. Once the choice has been made by the mother to place the child for adoption the decision cannot be overturned.

Contraception

The birth of a child should be wanted and planned in full awareness and certainty of its importance. Today there are many different methods of

contraception to choose from for single women or couples that allow the couple to have a safe and secure relationship..

Natural Methods of Contraception

These methods identify the woman's fertile period and can be useful for both those women who do not wish to become pregnant and those who do. Measuring the fertile period can be done in different ways but the results are not always reliable due to the variability of the woman's menstrual cycle. Thus natural methods are not a very effective means of contraception. *Withdrawal/ pulling out* (Il coito interrotto) is considered a natural method but is not reliable to prevent pregnancy and does not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

PLEASE NOTE

The effectiveness of any method of contraception is how reliable it is to prevent pregnancy. The FCC staff can help you choose the best method of contraception for you. The correct use of contraceptives avoids unwanted pregnancies and allows the couple to decide the right moment to have a child.



Which other methods of contraception are available in Italy?

- ✓ The pill or hormonal contraceptive prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation: the mucus in the cervix thickens whilst the lining of the uterus thins thus making it difficult for a fertilised egg to attach to it. The pill is very effective but must be taken with care. It does not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STD).
- ✓ The birth control patch can be applied to various parts of the body. It has to be changed every week and does not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- ✓ The vaginal ring is thin, transparent and flexible. It is inserted into the vagina and has to be changed once a month. It does not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- ✓ The male condom, made from latex, is worn on the penis and keeps sperm from entering the vagina. It protects couples from both infection and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- ✓ The female condom is a soft resistant sheath that is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse to avoid unwanted pregnancy and the spread of infection or sexually transmitted diseases.
- ✓ The injected contraceptive is injected usually in the arm, everyone or three months to prevent unwanted pregnancy in that period. It does not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- ✓ The coil/ IUD is a small device that is surgically implanted by a gynaecologist in the uterus, where its presence cannot be felt. It does not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

If you have had unprotected sex and think you may be pregnant.

You must go either to your family doctor, the Family Counselling clinic or Casualty/ Emergency at the hospital for advice and a possible prescription for emergency contraception – “morning after

pill”.

The emergency contraception prevents pregnancy after unprotected sex .If you are already pregnant it will not cause a miscarriage and will not protect against infection or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.



Prevention and Early Diagnosis of Cancer in Women

Italian public healthcare promotes and recommends to all women, Italian or foreign, to have checks for the prevention and diagnosis of cancer. Various clinical studies, national and international statistics have shown that cervix and breast cancer can be cured if diagnosed and treated in time.

For all the necessary tests you can go to your local Family Counselling Clinic and do all checks that the personnel will propose to you.

It is recommended: A smear test is recommended every 3 years, for women aged between 25 and 64 for the prevention and early diagnosis of cervix cancer, mammography is recommended annually for women aged between 45 and 49 and bi-annually for women aged 50-74, for the early diagnosis of breast cancer.

In many counties (regioni) it is possible to receive free screening for the prevention of cervix cancer and for early diagnosis of breast cancer.

Why is screening aimed at women of specific age groups?

Having a smear test between the ages of 25-64 is effective in identifying lesions that could possibly develop into an infiltrating cancer of the cervix and that could target also underlying tissues.

If you are aged over 64 and have had regular smear tests you have a smaller risk of infiltrating cancer. If

you have never had a smear test, even if you are aged over 64 and therefore out of the 25-64 age group, it is advisable to have at least one test.

The mammography is the most reliable way for early diagnosis of breast cancer because it can identify even the smallest of lesions. It is recommended to all women aged 45-74 who are most at risk.

What is a smear test?

It is a test to detect eventual presence of cancerous cells (or pre-cancerous cells) which is very useful for early diagnosis of cancer and pre cancerous lesions of the cervix. Cells are taken from the cervix and are examined under a microscope.

Cervix cancer develops very slowly and is not detectable with a normal gynaecological check-up. Symptoms are not prominent but become serious if not diagnosed and treated early on.



What is a mammography?

A mammography is a radiological test of the breasts and is the most reliable way for early detection of breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women and affects mostly the industrialised

West.

Today, If breast cancer arises and it is detected early on, it can be treated even without the need of a mastectomy.

The Menopause

This is a normal physiological stage for women, on average aged 43-53, which signals the end of fertility. The main noticeable symptom is menstruation ends. On entering this phase osteoporosis- weakening of the

bones- becomes common and the risk of vascular illnesses and breast cancer increases. It is therefore important to have regular check-ups with your family doctor or Family Counselling Clinic.

Fundamental rights for women and children

Italian law respects the principle of all people of their belonging to their own cultural roots, religion, family and community. Italian law condemns any form of violence or anti social behaviour that can harm an

individual's physical and mental state; including practise of damaging cultural traditions for women and young girls such as forced early marriages and mutilation of genitals. (MGF)

What is MGF?

The mutilation of female genitals consists of the total/ partial removal or cutting of the external parts for traditional reasons .

Mutilations can vary from the cutting of the clitoris to the sewing or closure of the vaginal opening



The law regarding MGF

All western organisations and occidental, African and Asian countries agree that MGF is a violation of the physical, mental and moral state of the woman and is a serious violation against the fundamental rights to health.

In Italy MGF carries a prison sentence

Law n.7 of 9th January 2006

sentences any person who is responsible for MGF with the aim of modifying the sexual function of the victim to 4-12 years imprisonment, which is increased by a third if the victim is a minor.

The person responsible for MGF will be sentenced also if the act is carried out on an Italian woman abroad or a foreign woman living in Italy.

Free telephone helpline 1522

This number is free to call nationally 24 hours a day, 365 days a year . In various languages it offers Italian and foreign women a specialised helpline where problems are listened to and questions dealt with. Callers can be directed to anti domestic violence centres, social/ health services, the police and relevant private associations which help, protect and support sufferers to escape violence.

PLEASE NOTE

Many associations for immigrant women in Italy condemn MGF and strive to prevent it. They support women through mutual self support groups and help women gain easier access to healthcare and social care. For any health problems you can go to the FCC.