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INFORMASALUTE

Access to the **National Health Service**
by **Foreign Citizens**



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Equal opportunities for women of the world

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GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Foreign citizens with regular stay permit and their regularly staying dependent family members are entitled to the same treatment, rights and responsibilities as Italian citizens with reference to contributory burden and the health care provided in Italy by the National Health Service (SSN). This right has the same validity in time of the stay permit. In order to obtain health assistance, registration with the SSN is required. **Registration can be either mandatory or voluntary.**

REMEMBER

The Italian Law recognises the right to health as a fundamental human right. Regularly staying foreign citizens are fully entitled to the same treatment and civil rights as Italian citizens. People registered with the National Health Service are guaranteed full assistance under the same conditions of Italian citizens.

Mandatory registration

Foreign citizens who meet the requirements provided by law are beneficiaries of mandatory health insurance, namely they have the right to register with the National Health Service.

Mandatory registration – or **by-right registration** – is guaranteed to citizens staying for work, family, international protection, citizenship wait, fostering or adoption. In particular, the reasons to stay that qualify for mandatory registration with the SSN are:

- Self-employment and employment (also seasonal) or registration with the employment office
- Awaiting employment
- Family reasons, family cohesion, family reunification (**except for parents aged 65 and over reunified** with regularly staying foreign citizens, who are entitled to voluntary registration)
- Political and humanitarian asylum request
- Political asylum
- Humanitarian asylum, including:
 - Stay permit for social protection
 - Under-18 minors
 - Extraordinary reception measures for exceptional events
- Stay permit for international or subsidiary protection
- Adoption wait (no stay permit is issued)

to minors but they are entitled to the same rights as Italian minors assigned to foster families)

- ▀ Fostering
- ▀ Citizenship acquisition
- ▀ Minors residing for health or treatment reasons
- ▀ Stay permit for treatment during

pregnancy and for care of the child during the first six months of life

- ▀ Stay permit for health reasons issued to foreign citizens who obtained a stay permit extension due to disease or accident at work
- ▀ Detainees and inmates

Which Local Health Authority (ASL) should I refer to for registration with the SSN?

*You have to apply for registration at the ASL of your municipality of **residence** or - if you are not already registered with the registry office - **abode**. By place of abode is meant the address indicated on your stay permit.*

Health care is also provided to your regularly staying dependent family members.

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Voluntary registration

Foreign citizens with a stay permit for more than three months and **not entitled to automatic registration with the SSN** can apply for voluntary registration:

- ▀ Students
- ▀ Au pairs
- ▀ Religious staff
- ▀ Holders of a stay permit for elective residence
- ▀ Over-65 reunified parents
- ▀ Employees of international organisations working in Italy, except for the cases regulated by international agreements
- ▀ Accredited staff of diplomatic and consular missions
- ▀ Workers who are not obliged to pay the income tax of physical persons to Italy
- ▀ Foreign citizens who take part in volunteer programmes
- ▀ Researchers staying in Italy for scientific research purposes
- ▀ Other categories non entitled to mandatory registration

Voluntary registration with the SSN occurs following a yearly income-based payment that can be extended to dependent family members. It refers to the calendar year (January 1 – December 31) and cannot be split up. Foreigners residing for **study purposes** and **au pairs** will pay a fixed yearly lump sum.

*Voluntary registration with the SSN can also be requested by foreign citizens staying for **study purposes** or **au pairs**, even if they have a stay permit for less than three months.*

They are also entitled to apply for registration for less than one year and for payment reduction.

***Please note.** In order to extend health care to dependent family members, they have to pay the complete lump sum.*

***Residents for medical treatment as per Article 36 of the Consolidated Immigration Act** (i.e. those migrants who entered Italy with a regular **visa for health reasons**) are not entitled to registration with the SSN.*

Useful information

What does “SSN” mean?

SSN indicates the Italian National Health System, namely the public health service. In order to use public health services you have to register with the National Health System. Registration with the SSN is implemented in the ASL (Local Health Authority)

closest to your place of residence or abode.

It is generally achieved in an office or desk called "Choice and Revocation of GP" (*scelta e revoca del medico*) where a list of the available GPs and paediatricians is provided to you. A **SSN card** indicating your identification number, name and the name of your GP

Remember! You have to show your stay permit and taxpayer's code.

The SSN card can only be requested by the involved person or by another person by showing a proxy and a copy of the applicant's identity document.

In case of loss of your SSN card, a duplicate can be requested by presenting the lost property report or a self-executed certificate and a valid identity document.

will be issued. Registration expires when your stay permit does. For renewal, you have to produce the receipt of renewal application for the ASL.

The SSN card

The SSN card is issued at the moment of your registration with the National Health Service and entitles you to use the Italian public health service.

On the card, there are indicated your name and the name of your GP.

The SSN card expires when your stay permit does.

Are you waiting for the first stay permit for employment or family reasons to be issued?

You are entitled to be registered with the SSN based on the documents certifying the stay permit application.

If you are already registered with the SSN and you are waiting for your stay permit to be renewed, you continue being registered.

Please note. You can access health services only by showing your **SSN card**.

Choice of the General Practitioner and/or Paediatrician

Registration with the SSN entitles you to choose a general practitioner and a paediatrician in case of regularly staying under-14 children.

This entitles you to undergo free outpatient and in-home medical examinations and to obtain prescriptions for medications and specialist services.

I received a magnetic SSN card, does it replace my paper card?

The magnetic card does not replace your paper card, which has to be kept as it indicates the name of your GP or paediatrician and possible co-pay fee exemption.

You can decide to replace either the general practitioner or the paediatrician whenever you want.

The general practitioner

Every person registered with the Italian National Health System is entitled to choose a general practitioner, also called **family doctor**.

You have to choose your GP by looking up in the list available at the ASL of your place of residence (or abode), where registration with the SSN is achieved.

A regards under-14 children, a **paediatrician** should be chosen following the same modalities as for GPs.

The main task of the general practitioner and the paediatrician is to protect health by making diagnoses and prescribing the most suitable treatments.

You can decide to replace either the general practitioner or the paediatrician whenever you want.

Each GP or paediatrician has an outpatient department where he guarantees **free** general medical examinations at the fixed hours.

You can also refer to him for:

- Employee's medical certificate
- Medical certificate for readmission to school
- Prescription for specialist and diagnostic examinations
- Request for non-emergency hospital admission
- Request for thermal treatment
- Prescription of medicines

In-home medical examinations

*If needed, the GP or paediatrician can make **in-home medical examinations**. They are performed when the health conditions of the patient do not allow him to reach the GP's outpatient department.*

All the above-mentioned medical services are free of charge.

The doctor on duty

In Italy, the doctor on duty (guardia medica) is a free health care service you can contact by phone in emergency cases when your GP or paediatrician is not available.

The service is normally in operation **during the night and on holidays**.

Please note.

The telephone number of the doctor on duty varies from city to city. Always look up in the telephone book of the city you are in.

By calling this number, a doctor will give you advice and make an in-home examination if needed. After examination and first treatment, he can prescribe medicines, issue medical certificates and suggest hospital admission.

Medicines

The medicines prescribed by your doctor are available at the chemist's.

Some drugs considered "life-savers" are free or on payment of a co-pay fee (the so-called "ticket").

Other medicines are not included in the services of the SSN and have to be paid entirely. At the chemist's there also are the so-called "over-the-counter drugs" that may be sold without medical prescription on payment of the entire price.

"Generic" or "equivalent" drugs

They coincide with the medicines prescribed by your doctor, contain the same active principles and have the same therapeutic effects, but their price is lower.

By consulting your medical prescription, the chemist can inform you on the possibility to substitute the prescribed medicine with generics.

In your area, you will always find a chemist's open during the night and on holidays. Outside every chemist's shop there is information about the chemists open in your area.

Specialist examinations and laboratory tests

In order to undergo specialist examinations and radiological and laboratory tests you have to obtain an **authorisation**, namely a medical prescription issued by your GP or paediatrician. For specialist and outpatient examinations you generally have to make a reservation by showing a medical prescription and your SSN card at the reception of the hospital or outpatient department where you will undergo the examination.

Specialist examinations are provided on payment of a co-pay fee, except in case of exemption.

Be on time!

The examination or test will take place on the fixed day and hour. If you cannot be present, you can cancel the reservation.

Hospitals

Italian hospitals may be either **public** or **private**.

Hospital admission occurs on written medical prescription from the GP.

In case of health emergency, the doctor of the first aid station may order hospitalisation.

Hospital admission expenses are on charge of the SSN.

Remember

*The hospital staff must inform you about all risks connected with surgical operations, anaesthesia, etc. and about possible alternatives to treatment. Before undergoing an operation, they will ask you to sign an **informed consent form**.*

In public hospitals, the staff (doctors, nurses and technical operators) is not entitled to receive any payment in money or in kind.

Health emergencies

The emergency number 118

The 118 is a free public emergency service available 24/24 hours. The telephone number **118** must be dealt only in case of emergency requiring immediate intervention. The 118 service does not replace the **general practitioner** or the **doctor on duty**.

When you call the 118 service you have to:

- Tell your name, surname and telephone number
- Describe the emergency situation
- Specify the place of the emergency; namely address, street number, place and possible points of reference

The first aid station

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In case of health emergency (accident or life-threatening situations) you can go to the first aid station of the closest hospital. The first aid station provides first treatment in case of health emergency.

Please note. Patients are not admitted to the first aid station according to their arrival time, but based on the assessment by the reception staff of the severity of their symptoms.

Remember!

The first aid station is an emergency service. For important but not emergency health problems you have to refer to you GP (or, if he is not available, to the doctor on duty) and to access specialist examination through medical prescription.

How to accede to the first aid station

Access to the first aid station can occur directly or through the 118 service.

At the **admission triage**, the health staff will assign you a **colour code** in order to give priority to people in danger of death and with severe symptoms, other patients are admitted according to their arrival time.

Co-pay fee (*ticket*) exemption

The **ticket** is the co-pay fee provided by the public National Health System (SSN). All citizens have to pay a ticket before undergoing specialist examinations, except for those who are entitled to **exemption**. The co-pay fee must be paid at the payment counter of the outpatient department or hospital before using medical services.

Some particular circumstances (disability, chronic diseases, status of inability, low income or age reasons) entitle patients to co-pay fee exemption. For further information on the requisites for exemption and on the issuing of the exemption certificate or card, you can refer to the exemption office of your ASL.

FAQ ▸ Frequently asked questions

I have a stay permit for work reasons (employment or seasonal work).

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?

- Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
- Identity document
- Taxpayer's code
- Self-certification of residence or statement of abode
(Please note: registration with the SSN has the same validity in time as the stay permit)

I entered Italy for work-related reasons following the Decree on Flows (Decreto Flussi) and I am waiting for my first stay permit to be issued.

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?

- Receipt certifying the submission of the stay permit application
- Photocopy of the authorisation issued by the Immigration Desk at the Prefecture
- Copy of residence contract
- signed at the Prefecture
- Identity document
- Taxpayer's code
- Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

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I am regularly staying in Italy for self-employment.

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?

- Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
- Identity document
- VAT number or INPS position
- Taxpayer's code
- Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

I am registered with the employment office and I have a stay permit for awaiting employment. Am I entitled for mandatory registration with the SSN?

- Yes, You have to produce the following documents for submitting your registration request:
- Stay permit or receipt of issue application
 - Identity document

- ▀ Taxpayer's code
 - ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode
- In order to obtain the **exemption**

card from the payment of the co-pay fee, you also have to submit a copy of registration with the Employment Office.

I have a stay permit for family reasons.

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?

- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
- ▀ Identity document
- ▀ Taxpayer's code
- ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

I am waiting for the first stay permit for family reunification to be issued.

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?

- ▀ Receipt certifying the submission of the stay permit application
- ▀ Photocopy of the authorization issued by the Immigration Desk at the Prefecture
- ▀ Identity document
- ▀ Taxpayer's code
- ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN of my over-65 parent who entered Italy for family reunification?

Your parent is entitled to voluntary registration with the SSN, you have to submit the following documents to the ASL:

- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
- ▀ Identity document
- ▀ Taxpayer's code
- ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode
- ▀ Payment receipt (the post office paying-in slip is directly available at the ASL offices)

**I am regularly staying in Italy for family cohesion (*coesione familiare*).
Am I entitled for mandatory registration with the SSN?**

- Yes, you have to submit the following documents:
- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
 - ▀ Identity document
 - ▀ Taxpayer's code
 - ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

**I am the regularly staying foreign parent of a minor born in Italy.
Which documents should I submit for his/her registration with the SSN?**

- ▀ Birth certificate
- ▀ Taxpayer's code of your child

**I am holder of a stay permit for political/humanitarian asylum
or subsidiary protection. Which are my rights as regards health care?**

- You are entitled to mandatory registration to the SSN, you have to submit the following documents to the ASL:
- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
 - ▀ Identity document
 - ▀ Taxpayer's code
 - ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

**I am an asylum/international protection seeker in Italy.
Which are my rights as regards health care?**

- In order to register with the SSN, you have to submit the following documents to the ASL of your area:
- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
 - ▀ Taxpayer's code
 - ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

Asylum or international protection seekers are exempted from the co-pay fee following the statement of indigence, this principle is valid up to six months following the submittal of the asylum application. As of the seventh month, asylum seekers

are entitled to work. In order to notify their status of unemployment, they need to register with the Employment Office and obtain the **exemption card** for low-income reasons.

I have a stay permit for Italian citizenship acquisition.

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?

- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issue/renewal application
- ▀ Taxpayer's code
- ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

I am the fostering person/guardian of a minor child with stay permit for minor age.

Which documents should I submit for his/her registration with the SSN?

- ▀ Stay permit or receipt of issuing/renewal application
 - ▀ Identity document
 - ▀ Taxpayer's code
 - ▀ Self-certification of residence
 - ▀ or statement of abode
- If the minor is waiting for the first stay permit to be issued, a copy of the adoption or pre-adoption fostering provision should also be submitted.

I started adoption practices for a minor child who is now living with me.

Which documents should I submit for his/her registration with the SSN?

- ▀ Adoption or pre-adoption fostering provision
- ▀ Identity document
- ▀ Taxpayer's code
- ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode signed by the guardian

**I am the guardian of a minor child with a stay permit for fostering.
Which documents should I submit for his/her registration with the SSN?**

- Stay permit or receipt of issuing/renewal application
 - Identity document
 - Taxpayer's code
 - Self-certification of residence
- or statement of abode
- If the minor child is waiting for the first stay permit to be issued, a copy of the adoption or pre-adoption fostering provision should also be submitted.

Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN of minors staying for psycho-physical recovery?

- Documents certifying guardianship within the frame work of humanitarian programmes
- Identity document
- Taxpayer's code
- Residence/abode signed by the guardian

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**I am regularly staying in Italy for health reasons/treatment for pregnancy.
Which documents should I submit for registration with the SSN?**

- Stay permit or receipt of issuing/renewal application
- Identity document
- Taxpayer's code
- Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

Are foreign detainees entitled to use public health services?

- All foreign detainees are entitled to mandatory registration with the SSN for the detention period, **whether they have a regular stay permit or not**, including detainees on parole or those given alternative forms of punishment. Detainees are exempted from paying the co-pay fee (ticket).

I am regularly staying in Italy for judicial reasons.**Am I entitled to registration with the SSN?**

- You are entitled to mandatory registration with the SSN. You have to submit the following documents to the ASL:
- ▀ Stay permit or receipt
 - ▀ of issuing/renewal application
 - ▀ Taxpayer's code
 - ▀ Self-certification of residence or statement of abode

I am a worker waiting for regularisation as per Law 102/09.**Am I entitled to use health care services?**

Foreign citizens for whom an application for regularisation has been filed, as per Law no. 102 of August 3, 2009, can temporarily register with the SSN, while waiting for the disclosure procedure to be completed. Applying for disclosure as per Law 102/2009 actually makes applicants **equal to the recipients of mandatory insurance as per Article 34 of the Consolidated Immigration Act**, i.e. individuals entitled to registration with the SSN.

Registration with the SSN of the foreign citizens waiting for regularisation entails, should they have no taxpayer's code, **that a temporary code is assigned** (taxpayer's fictitious code, or STP code) and **a card is issued** which will grant access to all SSN services, with the possibility of choosing a general practitioner and – in case of minor children – paediatrician.

Registration with the SSN has a maximum duration of six months and can be renewed, should the regularisation procedure not be accomplished by this deadline.

I am regularly staying for study reasons. Am I entitled to use public health services?

Yes, you are entitled for voluntary registration with the SSN. Registration is **individual** and on payment of a **yearly lump sum** that can be extended to your family members by paying a higher amount.

Remember. Should you be dependant of family members residing for one of the reasons that bring about the mandatory registration with the SSN, you will automatically entitled to registration.

I am an au pair domestic worker with regular stay permit.

Am I entitled to use public health services?

Yes, you are entitled for voluntary registration with the SSN. Registration is **individual** and on payment of a **yearly lump sum** that can be extended to your family members by paying a higher amount.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

equal opportunities for women of the world

The Italian Law guarantees the right of every woman, either Italian or foreign, to health, economical and social assistance, to psychological support and to equal treatment at work. The Italian National Health System provides every woman with services aimed at prevention, motherhood protection, assistance of children, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases.

The Family Advice Bureau is the place where first health and social assistance is provided. It is a public health and social service offering prevention, information, social, medical and psychological education and information through the activity of specialised professionals.

About the family advice bureau

The Family Advice Bureau is a public social and health service promoting the physical and mental health of women, couples, adolescents and children.

You can refer to the Family Advice Bureau for problems related to:

- Contraception
- Pregnancy
- Post-birth care and breastfeeding assistance
- Vaccinations for children
- Voluntary interruption of pregnancy
- Advice on anonymous childbirth
- Tumour prevention
- Emotional and sexual education
- Eating behaviour disorders
- Family mediation in case of separation or divorce
- Fertility and sterility
- Fostering and adoption
- Violence and abuses on women and minors
- Support to couples or families suffering disadvantaged social and economical conditions
- Psychological problems in particular moments of life (i.e. adolescence, pregnancy, motherhood)
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Menopause
- Legal advice

The staff of the Family Advice Bureau is qualified and composed of specialised operators such as doctors, gynaecologists, psychologists, obstetrics, health assistants, social workers and lawyers. The services of the Family Advice Bureau are free of charge and open to all people; the Bureau cooperates with hospitals and other services working on the territory (i.e. schools, municipalities, associations).

Access to the Family Advice Bureau is free and no medical prescription is needed. You can go and talk with operators without appointment. If needed, they will take an appointment for you to undergo medical examinations.

The services provided by the Family Advice Bureau are free, except for some gynaecological services for which the payment of a co-pay fee (ticket) is needed.

The protection of motherhood

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All those women living in Italy are entitled to motherhood protection. If you think you are pregnant, you can refer to your family doctor or to the closest Family Advice Bureau. You have the right to participate in a specific programme of assistance during pregnancy and you will be attended until the first months of life of your child. The activities provided are:

- 1 Assistance during pregnancy:** obstetrical examinations, echographies, instrumental check-ups and tests, childbirth preparation courses and legal advice for working women
- 2 Assistance during childbirth:** assistance during labour and childbirth, education and advice for breastfeeding and newborn care
- 3 Assistance after childbirth:** in particular post-partum examinations

Your child

After childbirth, the obstetrician issues a certificate to be used for registration of the newborn with the registry office. Registration should be completed within ten days from the birth at the registry office of your Municipality or within three days at the medical directorate of the hospital.

Your under-6 child is entitled to free specialist examinations, laboratory tests and other services if your family income is below the limits set by the Law. If you have serious social

and economical problems, you can refer to a social worker.

Vaccines

Your child's health needs to be protected in every moment of his/her life. Vaccines constitute the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases and their complications. In Italy, some **vaccinations are compulsory by law**, such as antidipteria, antitetanus, antipolio and anti-hepatitis B; other vaccines are **voluntary but recommended**. It is important to refer to the **paediatrician** to get further information and advice. The Family Advice Bureau can provide you with all information on **compulsory vaccinations**.

Registration with the SSN of the newborn

One of the parents has to submit to the ASL an identity document and a self-certification of the newborn's data for his registration with the SSN. A personal health code is attributed to the child; it indicates the name of the paediatrician chosen from the list available at the ASL.

Remember!

If your child initiated a vaccination programme in his country of origin, he can continue it at the Family Advice Bureau. If possible, show the vaccination certificate to the service.

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Voluntary interruption of pregnancy (VIP)

The Italian Law provides the possibility of interrupting the pregnancy within 90 days from the beginning of the last menstruation. If, once considered all possibilities, you decide to have an abortion, you can go to the Family Advice Bureau where a gynaecologist will issue a certificate for undergoing voluntary interruption of pregnancy (the same certificate may be issued by your gynaecologist, your general practitioner or another specialised doctor). You will be referred to the hospital ward where the operation will be performed.

Remember!

The Family Advice Bureau provides interviews and advice for removing all those causes that could lead to the decision to undergo a VIP. It also offers psychological counselling and information about voluntary associations and social services.

I cannot keep the baby but I don't want to have an abortion

*The Italian Law allows **anonymous childbirth** (without giving any personal information and without showing any document) and not to recognise your child legally, but at the same time it guarantees to the child the possibility to have a family. This is not considered a crime and does not involve sanctions or notification to the police.*

After childbirth, the mother has the right to leave the child in hospital and she can decide to recognise him within 10 days. If it does not happen, the child becomes free for adoption and his custody is granted to a family waiting for adoption.

It is a final decision with no going back.

Contraception

An important event such as the birth of a child can and should be desired and planned with awareness and certainty. Today, there is the possibility to choose, among the many existing contraceptives, the most suitable to the needs of every woman or couple and the one allowing safety and acceptability for the partners when living their sexual life.

Natural contraceptive methods

They allow calculating the fertile period of a woman and are useful both for those women who do not want to be pregnant and for those who wish to have a baby.

The fertile period can be calculated in different ways, but it is not always reliable, also due to the variability of the menstrual cycle. This is why natural methods have low effectiveness as contraceptives.

The **withdrawal method** is considered a natural method as it does not provide using substances or devices. It has low effectiveness in preventing pregnancy and does not protect from sexually transmitted diseases.

Remember!

The efficacy of contraceptives resides in their capacity to prevent pregnancy. The health staff of the Family Advice Bureau can help you choosing the most suitable contraceptive methods for your needs. A correct use of contraceptives allows avoiding unwanted pregnancies and deciding when to have a baby.

Which other contraceptive methods are available in Italy?

- **Pills**, also called hormonal contraceptives, prevent pregnancy by blocking ovulation and modifying the local function of the uterine mucosa and of the tubes. They are highly effective but require very regular consumption. They do not protect from sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Contraceptive patches** are applied on the skin in any part of the body. They must be replaced every week and do not protect from sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Vaginal rings** are thin, transparent and flexible. They must be inserted in the vagina and replaced every month, they do not protect from sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Male condoms** are latex sheaths that must be worn on the penis to prevent sperm from flowing into the vagina. They protect both partners from sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Female condoms** are a soft and resistant sheaths that must be inserted in the vagina before sexual intercourses in order to avoid pregnancy and infection from sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Contraceptive injections** are monthly or quarterly intramuscular injections that prevent from pregnancy for one or three months. They do not protect from sexually transmitted diseases.
- The **IUD** (Intra Uterine Device) is a small plastic device that the gynaecologist inserts in the womb. The woman does not feel it, even during sexual intercourses. It does not protect from sexually transmitted diseases.

If you had unprotected sex

*You must refer to your general practitioner, to the Family Advice Bureau or to the first-aid station as soon as possible to obtain advice and, if needed, a medical prescription for **emergency contraception**. Emergency contraceptives, also called “morning after pills”, prevent pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse.*

Emergency contraception does not protect from sexually transmitted diseases and cannot cause an abortion if you are already pregnant.

Prevention and early diagnosis of female tumours

The Italian National Health Service promotes and recommends to all Italian and foreign women medical examinations for preventing and diagnosing female tumours. A number of clinical studies and international surveys proved that it is possible to recover from cervical and breast cancer if it is early diagnosed and treated. You can rely upon the Family Advice Bureau and undergo the tests that the staff will propose to you.

Namely, the **pap-test**, that women from **25 to 64 years** should undergo every three years for prevention and early diagnosis of cervical cancer; **mammography**, to be undergone every year by women from **45 to 49 years** and every two years by women from **50 to 74 years** for early diagnosing breast cancer.

In many Italian Regions it is possible to access free screening programmes for the prevention and early diagnosis of cervical and breast cancer.

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Why are screening programmes addressed to particular age groups?

A pap-test undergone by women from 25 to 64 years is effective to identify lesions that could develop into cervical infiltrating cancer, namely that could also affect the tissues below.

Over-64 women who periodically underwent the test are at lower risk of infiltrating cancer.

Over-64 women who never underwent the test, should be tested at least once even if they are not included in the age group at risk.

Mammography is the most reliable test for early diagnosing a breast cancer because it can identify even very small lesions.

It is recommended for women from 45 to 74 years because they are the age group at higher risk.

About the Pap-Test

The Pap-test is a cytological examination useful for early diagnosing cervical cancer and pre-tumoural lesions. It provides the collection of cells from the womb, which are then examined under the microscope.

Cervical tumour develops very slowly and cannot be diagnosed through normal gynaecological examination. It does not cause any symptoms for a long time, but it becomes very dangerous if not detected and treated on time.

About mammography

Mammography is a radiological examination of the breast and represents the most reliable method to early diagnosing a breast cancer.

Breast cancer is rather frequent among women living in industrialised western countries and represents the first cancer death cause among women.

Nowadays, breast cancer can be diagnosed very early and recovery is possible also without complete removal of the mamma.

The menopause

The menopause is not a disease, but a normal physiological phase of women's lives representing the end of the fertile age. The most evident consequence is the disappearance of menstruation.

The average age for menopause is between 43 and 53 years. During this phase, your bones get weaker and the risk of fracture increases (osteoporosis), together with the risk of vascular diseases and of breast cancer.

It is important to undergo periodical check-ups by referring to your general practitioner or to the family advice bureau.

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The fundamental rights of women and children

The Italian law respects the cultural, religious, family and community roots to which every human being belongs. It condemns all kinds of violence and behaviour, even cultural, that can damage people's physical and psychic integrity, including traditional practices affecting women and young girls such as forced premature marriage and female genital mutilations (FGM).

About MGF

FGM include total or partial removal or lesion of external female genitalia for cultural or religious reasons or for other non-medical causes.

There are different types of FGM with different degrees of severity, from clitoris removal to the so-called infibulation (excision of all or part of the external female genitalia and suture or closure of the vaginal opening).

Regulations on MGF

All international organisation and all Western, African and Asian countries agree in conceiving FGM as a violation of the physical, mental and moral integrity of women and as a violation of the fundamental right to health.

In Italy, FGM are a crime punishable with incarceration.

Law 7 of January 9th, 2006 provides from 4 to 12 years of incarceration for people practicing mutilations for non-therapeutic purposes and with the objective of modifying the sexual functions of the woman. Punishment is increased by one third if the victim is a minor.

The perpetrator is punished even if the operation is performed abroad on an Italian citizen or on a foreign woman living in Italy.

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1522

1522 is a number of public utility available **24/7**, it can be contacted **free of charge** from all the national territory. It provides a multilingual service dedicated to listen and analyse needs. The service also offers information and advice on the access to centres against violence, social and medical services, police stations and private services available on the territory and dedicated to help, protection and support to flee from violence.

Remember!

There are many associations of foreign women committed with the prevention and eradication of Female Genital Mutilations; they support women through mutual support groups and by facilitating access to social and health care services.

If you have a health problem, you can refer to the Family Advice Bureau.

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