Family Doctors and Paediatricians
General practitioners and family paediatricians can be consulted about any problem affecting their patients’ health, from disease prevention to diagnosis and treatment.

All Italian citizens residing in Italy and foreigners with regular residence permits are entitled to be assisted by a doctor or paediatrician, in case of children. The choice is made by each citizen at the Local Health Authority (ASL). It is possible to choose among doctors operating within the local health service, who are available to assist new patients.

The choice of a paediatrician is required from a child’s birth up to six years of age. Afterwards, until the fourteenth birthday, parents can decide whether to have their child assisted by a pediatrician or a general practitioner. In case of patients with chronic diseases, paediatricians can be consulted exceptionally until the age of 16. If patients decide the doctor they chose does not meet their needs, they can choose another one at any time. If the former doctor is a member of an association, the choice of a colleague belonging to the same group is subject to the latter’s consent. Patients may also be refused by their doctors: in this case, the ASL will inform the citizen, asking him to choose another doctor.

Citizens temporarily staying in a place, whose local health authority is other than that of their place of residence, are entitled to choose a doctor operating within the new health service, as long as their period of stay is no less than three months and no more than one year (renewable) and it is motivated by age (over 75 years), or due to work, education or health reasons (with specific exemption for disease).
How doctors and paediatricians work

Doctors and paediatricians assist their patients both in their surgeries and, in some cases, at home. Some physicians work individually, while many others are organised in association with other colleagues.

a) Clinic visits
General practitioners and family paediatricians work in their surgeries from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., from Monday to Friday. Before or after this time slot, health care is guaranteed by the emergency medical service: you just need to dial 118.
Each doctor shall establish the opening hours of his surgery/surgeries, guaranteeing at least five days a week. The timetable is displayed on the door of the surgeries and published on the portal (ASL Mantova > Family Doctors).

b) Domiciliary visits
Home visits
Home visits can be arranged only when the patient’s health conditions do not allow him to go to the surgery. Whether home visits are necessary or not is to be considered by the doctor case by case.
If the request is received within 10 a.m., the visit must be made on the same day, otherwise it will be carried out the following day by 12 noon. The request for a home visit can be received by the physician himself, the medical staff or a recording instrument (answering machine).

Domiciliary assistance for frail patients
In case of patients with diseases affecting their self-sufficiency, doctors or paediatricians plan when to visit them at home. The home care plan is proposed by the family doctor and authorised by the Local Health Authority. Home care can be provided with the assistance of specialist physicians, nursing and rehabilitation staff (and social workers, when necessary).
The patient does not have to pay for the visits made by the doctor or paediatrician.

c) Associated doctors
It is possible for doctors to work jointly, either in their own surgeries or sharing the same place.
Associated doctors can work until 7 or 8 p.m. and, in some cases, even on Saturday morning, according to the procedures established within the association.
In case of real need, patients can be seen by other associated physicians, when their family doctor’s surgery is closed.
Associated physicians can also treat other doctors’ patients, when they are off sick, on holiday, vocational training or other reasons. Each association is required to display the document describing the services offered by the associated doctors to their patients.
a) Free services

- clinic visits;
- home visits;
- prescriptions of medicines, specialist examinations, diagnostic tests and therapies;
- admission to hospitals operating within the National Health Service;
- proposals for nursing home care;
- prescriptions of thermal treatments charged to the National Health Service;
- health certificate for employees;
- "good health" certificate for non-competitive sports (requested by the headmaster for activities outside the school time);
- certificate of cause of death within 24 hours from the decease (National Statistical Institute data);
- special services at home or in the doctor's surgery, according to the patient's health conditions: small surgery, drip feeds, vaccinations, intravenous injections;
- course of intravenous drips or injections, aerosol in the doctor's surgery, as long as previously authorised by the Local Health Authority;
- vaccinations within specific prevention campaigns promoted by the Local Health Authority.

b) Private services

The following services are performed by doctors with receipt for tax purposes. Tariffs are set by the physician, in accordance with the national tariffs.

- extra clinic or home visits to patients;
- visits to military service soldiers and community service volunteers;
- occasional visits;
- sport certificates for school (excluding those listed above, among the free services);
- certificates for disability pensions (National Social Security Institute, etc.);
- certificates for admission to retirement homes;
- certificates for insurance or private use;
- proposals for thermal treatments charged to health providers (other than the National Health Service: e.g. INPS, INAIL, ...);
- other certificates (e.g. for possession of firearms, health resorts and holiday camps, nutritionists);
- any other certification and/or service not expressly included among those specified as free.
c) Services that cannot be performed
General practitioners and family paediatricians are sometimes asked to perform services they are not authorised to carry out, in accordance with the medical ethics and the current regulations. Here are some examples:

- tests aimed at issuing/renewing a driving/navigation/hunting license;
- tests and/or drug prescriptions requested by sports clubs, hair-care and/or beauty salons;
- tests or prescriptions for workers in the framework of their activities;
- tests or prescriptions of specialist examinations prior to surgery that will be performed during hospitalisation;
- prescriptions of medicines or other aids to be used during hospitalisation or in retirement homes.
Patients’ rights and duties

Trust is the main rule for the relationship between patients and physicians. A trustworthy relationship is based on the knowledge and respect of some general principles, which are the patients’ rights and duties, to guarantee better service.

Each patient is ENTITLED to:
• tasks and functions assigned by the conventions regulating the activity of general practitioners or family paediatricians;
• basic rights of the individual as required by the medical ethics;
• processing and confidential transmission of personal data;
• timely and accurate information on diagnosis and prognosis;
• doctor’s activity marked by availability and attention to his needs.

Each patient must:
• respect the professional dignity and independence of his doctor;
• not press his doctor for drug prescriptions, tests and/or visits, when not considered necessary by the doctor himself;
• not ask his doctor to do something inconsistent with the regional and/or national regulations;
• not ask his doctor to use certain procedures to perform tests and/or visits, when not considered appropriate by the doctor himself;
• not ask for prescriptions for services already performed or reserved;
• not expect the transcription of diagnostic or therapeutic proposals from private or self-employed specialist physicians.