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**OBSTETRICAL-GYNAECOLOGICAL  
ASSISTANCE AT THE FAMILY  
COUNSELLING CENTRE**

**Come to the centre! Access is free and does not require a prescription**

**You can find out when to have a CONSULTATIVE GYNAECOLOGICAL EXAMINATION**

It is advisable to have a gynaecological examination once a year when you are over 18, even if you are not sexually active.

A gynaecological examination is required if:

- you are over 16 and have not yet had your menstrual cycle
- you have already had your first sexual relations
- you know you are, or suspect you might be, pregnant
- you have itching or burning in the external genital organs (vagina and vulva)
- you have unusual vaginal discharge
- you have pain in the lower abdomen
- your menstrual cycle has become irregular and/or heavier
- you have a female genital mutilation

***Remember: it is also important to talk with the consultative gynaecologist about your breasts.***

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ASL di Lecce

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**You can find out how to perform PREGNANCY CHECKS**

In Italy, the law protects maternity from a social and healthcare point of view; it is important for a pregnant woman to contact the counselling centre as soon as possible. In the counselling centre you can receive the following services:

- scheduled obstetric visits
- blood pressure check
- weight check and fetal heartbeat check (BCF)
- instrumental diagnostic procedure (ultrasound)
- prescriptions for laboratory tests (blood and urine tests) to be performed at accredited public or private health facilities

***Remember: it is important to know that you can give birth in hospital even if you do not have permission to stay; in the event that you cannot keep the baby, you must know that you can entrust it to the hospital staff without facing legal consequences and without giving your personal details.***

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**You can find out the CORRECT NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY**

It is very important to eat properly during pregnancy. It is advisable to:

- have small and frequent meals: five meals, including two snacks
- avoid periods of fasting
- eat slowly
- have a protein-rich diet: eat legumes, meat, fish, milk and eggs
- have a diet rich in vitamins: eat seasonal fruits and vegetables
- choose olive oil among fats
- drink natural water; consume coffee and tea in moderation
- use salt sparingly and avoid using nuts
- avoid consuming raw meat, molluscs, spirits and sweeteners

***Remember: it is important to know that a healthy diet during pregnancy helps your child to be born healthy and then grow without problems.***

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### **You can attend PRENATAL MEETINGS**

The Prenatal Meetings (IAN) are for pregnant women. The meetings deal with topics related to:

- pregnancy
- labour
- childbirth
- the postpartum
- breastfeeding

It is advisable to attend Prenatal meetings because:

- they promote the psycho-physical wellbeing of the expectant mother, couple and child
- they inform the woman about pregnancy, childbirth, puerperium and breastfeeding
- they allow women who are having the same experience to help each other and activate the group's support function
- they promote the learning of targeted relaxation techniques and the active management of childbirth
- they contribute to lower anxiety levels and improve delivery
- they help new parents in their new roles

***Remember: it is important to participate in prenatal meetings in order to experience labour and delivery as joyful and calm events in your life.***

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**You can find out how to carry out GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE**

For good personal hygiene it is necessary to know that:

- the external genitalia (vagina and vulva) must be washed with specific soap and water (pH 3.5 - 5.5)
- washing must be carried out with a movement from the vulva down towards the anus (front - back) and not vice versa
- after using the soap it is necessary to rinse thoroughly with running water using the same movement (front - back)
- it is necessary to use a personal towel and to dry without rubbing
- you should not use perfumed spray deodorants on the genitals

***Remember: it is important to know that pubic hair, if clean, has a barrier function to prevent the entry of various kinds of germs.***

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**You can find out how to PREVENT VAGINAL INFECTIONS**

To prevent vaginal infections it is essential to follow certain rules:

- wash the external genitalia correctly (front - back) at least once a day
- always wash before and after sexual intercourse and ask your partner to be hygienic
- always wash after each evacuation
- do not wear clothes (trousers) that are too tight
- use only natural fabric linens (cotton)
- always use condoms for casual sexual intercourse
- limit the use of pantyliners
- during the menstrual cycle, change your sanitary product frequently, whether it is external or internal
- in public toilets, never sit on the toilet without protection

***Remember: it is important to know that compliance with a few simple rules helps you to protect your health even more than using medicines.***

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**You can find out about the correct use of CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS**

Contraception is used to prevent unwanted pregnancy and protect the health of women who do not want to have a child.

Known contraceptive methods are classified as:

- natural (interrupted coitus, basal body temperature, abstinence in the fertile days of the cycle)
- barrier (condom and diaphragm)
- intrauterine (spiral or IUD)
- hormones (pill, patch, vaginal ring, subcutaneous implant)

Their effectiveness is variable and, if used correctly, contraceptive safety can be classified as follows:

natural methods	about	75 %
barrier methods	about	85 %
intrauterine methods	about	98 %
hormonal contraception	about	99 %

If, around the fertile period of the cycle, there is sexual intercourse without contraceptive protection, it is possible to use emergency contraception, the so-called morning-after pill.

**Remember: it is important to choose how and when to become a mother, because every child has the right to be wanted.**

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**You can find out how to PREVENT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated some rules for safe sex:

- always use a condom whenever you have sex, for any kind of sexual contact and for the duration of the contact
- always avoid unprotected intercourse, especially with new or casual partners, and promiscuous activity
- avoid rough intercourse because it can cause laceration
- lubricate the condom with gel for anal intercourse
- in case of abnormal secretions or genital lesions, avoid intercourse and contact your doctor
- swallowing biological fluids (semen or menstrual blood) is not recommended

***Remember: it is important to know that prevention is an act of respect for oneself and for others.***

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**You will get help with VOLUNTARY INTERRUPTION OF PREGNANCY**

In Italy, law no. 194 of 1978 allows voluntary interruption of pregnancy, at the request of the woman, even if she is a minor. The intervention takes place in a public hospital or in an accredited private clinic.

In the event of voluntary interruption of pregnancy, the Family Counselling Centre offers medical, psychological and social support; helps the woman in the established legal procedures and in contacting the hospital

To perform a voluntary interruption of pregnancy (VIG), by the 90th day of the last menstruation, the following are required:

- a laboratory test of the blood or urine, and/or an ultrasound, which confirms the pregnancy status
- a document, signed by the woman in question and the doctor, certifying the request for termination of pregnancy
- an identity document
- the health card or STP document - ENI

***Remember: it is important to know that at the Centre you have the opportunity to access free hormonal contraception.***

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### **You can find out how to deal with the MENOPAUSE**

The menopause is the absence, in the woman, of natural menstruation. The age of onset of the menopause is variable; on average, the disappearance of menstruation occurs around the age of 50.

The symptoms of the menopause are: hot flushes, night sweats, insomnia, irritability, depression, anxiety, vaginal dryness, urinary incontinence, decreased sexual desire, weight gain with decreased muscle mass and increased fat, osteoporosis.

The checks to be performed during the menopause, subject to doctor's advice, are:

- gynaecological examination
- Pap test
- pelvic ultrasound
- mammography and/or mammary ultrasound
- bone densitometry
- blood test

Treatment to combat the symptoms of menopause, especially when they are severe, must be chosen by the doctor on a case-by-case basis.

***Remember: for a good quality of life during the menopause it is important to adopt a suitable lifestyle, be careful with nutrition, limit alcohol consumption, cut out smoking and do regular physical activity.***