



# What shall I do if I need medical assistance?

*The health system  
in Lombardy region*

The **2026 Winter Olympic Games** will take place in **Italy** from **6 to 22 February** and will be followed by the **Paralympic Games** from **6 to 15 March**. If you are travelling to attend, follow this health advice to protect your health and well-being.

## General information

The Lombardy Health Service (LHS) is well known for its **high standards and efficiency**. There are over **200 private and public accredited hospitals and 18 research hospitals** (IRCCS). Most hospitals are run by the Lombardy Health Service, while about 22.4% of beds are located in private hospitals, either profit or not-for-profit.

Quality and Safety is the chief priority of the LHS. Several public and private hospitals in Lombardy increasingly attract patients from other Italian regions and abroad. Lombardy is particularly notable for the presence of some of the most important centres of excellence for cancer care and research, as well as for other disciplines, including surgical specialties (cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, paediatric surgery, robotic surgery, etc.).

Most hospitals in Lombardy have international links with other hospitals or research institutes, and experience in international partnerships and cooperation projects.

## In Lombardy, can people access healthcare for free?

Lombardy has universal healthcare coverage, but only some services are completely free. The co-pay fee is called "Ticket", and it is applied to some emergency room visits, specialist consultations, diagnostic procedures, and lab analyses.

## I'm a citizen of an EU country or an extra-EU country, should I need health insurance?

European Citizens are eligible to access healthcare in Italy under the European Health Insurance Mechanism. The services will be offered at no cost or at a reduced cost. In the second case, in the home country, the citizen is eligible for a refund belonging to the national health coverage system. Access to the emergency department is always free. Access to out-of-hours GP assistance is subject to a co-payment of 20,00 euros at the clinic and 35 euros at home. The EU citizen accessing an NHS service will be asked to provide the national health insurance card with the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) number.

Non-EU citizens must check whether a mutual agreement exists between their country and Italy to access free or lower-fee NHS services. At private practices, it's all out-of-pocket services, so it's a full private fee. The Olympic cluster will have access to Olympic health services in accordance with the specific instructions for this type of patient.

More information is available at the Italian Ministry of Health dedicated pages:

- [EU/EES](#)
- [ExtraEU/EES](#)

## **Do doctors and staff in Lombardy hospitals speak English?**

The majority of staff in Lombardy private and public health services speak English; in any case, if needed, an interpreter would be provided.

## **Which are the Olympic Hospitals in Lombardy?**

The Olympic Hub Hospital is Niguarda Hospital in Milan, which has a spoke hospital service at Sondalo Hospital.

## **What do I do if I need medical assistance?**

### **Emergency number**

For any life-threatening emergency (serious illness or injury, fire, violence, immediate danger), call the European unique emergency number 112. It is free and connects you to the appropriate emergency service (ambulance, police, fire).

Be ready to say what happened, where you are, and a callback number. It is discouraged to seek urgent care if you do not require immediate care, as you might experience long waiting times. For persons with pre-existing medical conditions, it is advisable to bring a summary of your medical records, if possible, to inform doctors in case of an emergency visit.

When you dial 112, a trained operator will answer your call. It is important to clearly communicate the nature of the emergency, your location, and any relevant details to ensure the appropriate help is dispatched promptly. The operator will guide you through the necessary steps and provide assistance until help arrives.

### **Where ARE U?**

["Where Are U"](#) is a free emergency app linked to the European unique emergency number 112 call centres. It lets you place an emergency call and automatically shares your precise location with the operator, helping responders reach you faster, especially if you can't explain where you are. The app works in areas where the 112 service is active. It's available on Android and iOS and includes a silent call option, useful if you're in danger and cannot speak.

### **How to access to the Emergency Department?**

For emergency assistance you can call the European Emergency number 112 (no country code needed). The service is provided at no charge, but of course only for serious medical conditions requiring emergency response. Patients accessing the ED are not seen in order of arrival but based on the urgency of their need, assessed through a standard evaluation process called triage.

## Non-emergency numbers

If it's not an emergency but you need medical advice or out-of-hours care (including tourist medical assistance), call 116117 in Lombardy: it's free and is active 24/7; an operator will triage and direct you to the right service.

For booking non-urgent specialist visits/exams in the Lombardy public system, you can use the regional booking numbers (800 638 638 or 02 999599 from mobile). If symptoms are severe or rapidly worsening, don't use these numbers, call 112 or go directly to an Emergency Department.

## How and where do I get medications?

Most medicines are available in pharmacies, or "farmacie" (usually marked by a green cross), while over-the-counter medicines can also be found in parapharmacies (parafarmacie) and in the health corner of major supermarkets.

As you prepare for your journey, remember to bring with you any chronic disease medications you are currently taking and plan refills early.

It is advisable to carry a doctor's prescription for every drug you plan to take during your stay in Italy. In case of doubt, a local clinician may need to re-issue the prescription.

Always bring with you all the necessary medical documentation. If you do not have a prescription or it is not accepted by the pharmacist, please contact the number 116117 to obtain all the necessary information.

EU/EEA citizens can request their medications and receive appropriate guidance and medical advice in Italian pharmacies by showing their prescriptions or asking for specific ones. More information available [here](#).

For information about pharmacies open outside normal hours (farmacie di turno) in Lombardy, please use the "[Farmacia Aperta](#)" service to locate the nearest one.

## Before attending the event

### Vaccination

Check your vaccination status and discuss with your doctor whether you need any vaccination, considering different factors, such as your age, place where you live, any underlying health conditions you might have.

Vaccination remains the most effective way to prevent severe illness from COVID-19 and seasonal influenza.

Consider vaccination if you are at higher risk of severe disease due to older age, underlying health conditions (diabetes, severe obesity, chronic lung, heart, liver, or kidney disease) and/or immunocompromising conditions, or pregnancy and you have not received a COVID-19 or seasonal influenza vaccine dose in the past 6-12 months.

More information on recommended vaccines in Italy [here](#).

WHO information and recommendations on COVID-19 vaccination [here](#).

WHO recommendations for routine immunization [here](#).

## While attending the event

### How to remain informed

To stay informed, follow the official websites and social media channels of the [Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games](#), Regione Lombardia, and the [Dipartimento della Protezione Civile](#).

Be aware that you may also receive official safety communications directly on your phone via IT-alert, the national public warning system that broadcasts urgent emergency messages (e.g., for natural disasters) to all mobile phones in affected areas. No app is needed: alerts are sent automatically by the authorities.

### Walk-in vaccination clinics for COVID-19 and influenza

During the Olympic Games, walk-in vaccination clinics will be available in the main Olympic areas, offering free seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.

Key information will also be available on [Wikivaccini](#), including a dedicated Olympics section to easily access reliable vaccination guidance before and during the event.

### Attending with kids - Baby pit-stop

If you attend the Winter Olympics with children, keep them close in crowds and identify meeting points in case you get separated.

Dress children warmly in layers suitable for cold outdoor conditions, make sure their routine vaccinations are up to date, and encourage frequent handwashing or use of hand gel - especially before eating and after using the toilet.

Some Olympic venues may offer dedicated baby pit-stop areas or family facilities for feeding, changing and rest. Check venue maps and signage on arrival and use these spaces to care for infants and young children in a calmer environment.

### Respiratory disease

Attending a mass gathering increases your risk of exposure to respiratory diseases. If you are not feeling well, do not attend public events, wash your hands frequently and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth to reduce the risk.

If you develop flu-like symptoms (cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath) during the Olympics:

- Stay home or in your hotel and limit contact with others
- Wash or clean your hands frequently with soap or an alcohol-based product.
- Maintain good respiratory hygiene and etiquette: cough or sneeze in your elbow
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Wear a face mask in crowded settings where physical distancing is not possible
- Arrange testing to rule out COVID-19 and influenza where available.

If you feel very unwell, or if you are at higher risk (older age, pregnancy, chronic disease, or immunosuppression), seek medical advice promptly.

## Cold exposure

During winter in Italy, especially in alpine areas, low temperatures can pose serious health risks. Prolonged cold exposure can lead to hypothermia, and, in severe cases, can be fatal.

Early signs may include shivering, cold or pale skin, numbness in the hands and feet, fatigue, clumsiness, and difficulty concentrating or confusion.

To reduce the risk, dress in layers (preferably thermal and waterproof outer layers) and protect the head, hands and feet. Drink warm fluids, eat high-energy foods, and avoid standing still outdoors for long periods. Limit alcohol, as it increases heat loss despite creating a false sensation of warmth. If you develop symptoms, move to a warm place, remove wet clothing, and seek medical help promptly.

For more guidance on recognising and managing hypothermia, see the [IFRC Global First Aid Centre](#). For hour-by-hour weather forecasts, consult the Italian [Air Force Meteorological Service \(MeteoAM\)](#).

## Food and water safety

In Italy, tap water is generally safe to drink, so you can use it for drinking and brushing your teeth. To lower the risk of food- and water-borne illness, eat raw fruit and vegetables only if washed thoroughly or peeled, and practise good hand hygiene before eating.

During the Olympics, public health authorities in the host areas plan enhanced food safety and drinking-water controls. If you have food allergies or special dietary needs, communicate them clearly and carry a short note in Italian to show restaurant staff. Avoid drinking water from taps marked "non potabile".

## Hand hygiene

Practise good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser when soap and water are not available. Clean your hands after using the toilet, before eating or handling food, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose—this helps reduce the spread of many respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. Keep a small bottle of hand sanitiser in your pocket or bag so you can clean your hands quickly on public transport or at outdoor venues.

## Sanitation/waste management issues (environmental hazards)

At crowded Olympic venues, use designated toilets and wash hands after using them and before eating (soap and water is best; carry an alcohol-based hand sanitiser for when sinks are busy or supplies run out).

In mass gatherings, organisers are expected to clean/disinfect high-touch areas (including sanitary facilities) and provide hand sanitiser points, but you still need to protect yourself: avoid touching your face, don't eat with unclean hands, and move away from overflowing toilets, sewage smells, or heavily soiled areas.

If you notice poor sanitation (e.g., no soap, blocked toilets, waste piling up), report it immediately to venue staff/security so cleaning teams can intervene.

## Sexual health advice

- Practicing safe sex

If you anticipate sexual activity with new or multiple partners during your stay, plan ahead to protect your health, and use condoms correctly and consistently during vaginal, anal, and oral sex to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Please note that vaccinations (HPV, hepatitis B) also reduce the risk of STIs and should be considered as part of sexual health protection.

In Italy, condoms are widely available in pharmacies, supermarkets, vending machines, and many petrol stations. Using condoms with water- or silicone-based lubricants (avoid oil-based products) also helps prevent breakage and irritation.

**If you have had unprotected sex** (without a condom) or sex with multiple partners, it is important to get tested for STIs, especially if you have symptoms. Even if you do not have any symptoms, getting tested is still advised, as you might have gotten the infection and could pass it on to your sexual partners.

- If you **already have symptoms** suggestive of an STI, such as itching during urination, purulent urethral discharge, or the presence of blisters, go directly to a STI clinic/sexual health service ([Network of STI prevention, testing and care services](#)). If symptoms are severe or urgent, go to the Emergency Department.
- If you are **not showing symptoms but you are concerned about having** HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), rapid tests are also available through NGOs, in a strictly confidential manner, that collaborate with the regional health system. Rapid tests allow early diagnosis and treatment, preventing complications and transmission. These services also provide sexual health information and distribute condoms. If a rapid test result is reactive, you will be referred to a specialised STI clinic for confirmatory testing and, if necessary, appropriate treatment.

## HIV or Mpox exposure

If you think you may have been recently exposed to HIV or Mpox, (for example, after unprotected sex with a partner of unknown status or condom failure), contact STI clinic/sexual health service for post-exposure prophylaxis. A HIV-dedicated number is also available: 800 861061.

## Emergency contraception ("after-sex" pill)

Emergency contraception can help prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or condom failure. It works best when taken as soon as possible, preferably within 12–24 hours and up to a few days, depending on the product. In Italy, emergency contraceptive pills are available from pharmacies, often without a prescription for adults, depending on the product.

## Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

Sexual violence, rape, and any unwanted sexual contact are crimes in Italy. If you are in immediate danger or need urgent help, call 112 or go to the nearest Emergency Department. You can also use the "Where Are U" app to quickly share your location, and if you cannot speak, use the silent call function. Tell staff clearly that

you have experienced sexual violence so they can prioritise your care.

Emergency Departments can provide urgent medical care, assess injuries, offer emergency contraception and prevention measures for infections when appropriate, document injuries, and connect you with specialised sexual-violence support services. You can seek medical care even if you are not ready to make a formal report; healthcare staff can explain your options and the next steps.

If you need support, guidance, or help finding local services, you can contact 1522, the national anti-violence and stalking helpline (free, 24/7, also available via chat). In Lombardy, Anti-Violence Centres and Safe Houses are listed on the [NonSeiDaSola](#) website.

## Alcohol

In Italy, it is prohibited to sell or offer alcoholic drinks to minors under 18 years. Since December 2024, Italy has a new road code with stricter penalties for drivers detected under the influence of alcohol. It is prohibited to drive with a blood alcohol level equal to or greater than 0.5 g/L, and zero alcohol applies to under-21s, new drivers (first 3 years) and professional drivers. If you are visiting from another EU country, penalties are forwarded to national police authorities in your home country.

Alcohol consumption poses serious health risks, such as an increased risk of cancers and various cardiovascular diseases. It impairs judgment and coordination and increases the risk of injuries and accidents, especially in crowded venues and winter conditions. Accidental poisonings can occur when large amounts of alcohol are consumed.

## Tobacco

Smoking and vaping are banned in indoor public places (with limited exceptions for designated smoking rooms), so follow venue signage and avoid smoking/vaping indoors. In Milan, smoking outdoors is restricted, and (from 1 January 2025) the ban is extended to all public outdoor areas unless you can keep at least 10 metres from other people.

Tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke carry major health risks, including respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and a higher risk of cancer.

## Drugs

Illegal drugs in Italy carry legal risks and, more importantly, health risks (unknown strength/adulterants, dangerous interactions, especially with alcohol). If you or someone else becomes severely unwell (collapse, breathing problems, seizures, confusion), call 112 immediately. For suspected poisoning, the Milan Poison Control Centre (Niguarda) can be contacted at 02 6610.

## Road safety

If you drive between Olympic venues, plan for winter road conditions: on many roads, you may be required to carry winter tires or snow chains during the cold season (often 15 Nov–15 Apr, depending on local ordinances and signage). Always use seat belts and ensure that children under 150 cm use approved child restraints.

Even if you are not driving, sudden snow or ice can affect walking and public transport. Monitor weather alerts and wear proper footwear to prevent slips on ice or snow.

## People with disabilities

- On train assistance and reservation

If you attend the Winter Olympics with people with disabilities, plan ahead by checking official venue information to confirm what accessibility features and assistance services are available. For travel between venues, consult official national ([Trenitalia](#)), regional ([Trenord](#)), or local (as [Milan Metro and Railway Network](#)) public transport websites in advance to identify accessible routes, stations, and vehicles, and ask event or transport staff for support when needed.

- DAMA Service – Disabled Advanced Medical Assistance

If you are supporting people with complex disabilities during the Olympics, remember that Lombardy has the DAMA service.

DAMA is a healthcare system designed to help people with cognitive or complex disabilities receive care in a calm and adapted way.

The service helps modify rooms, procedures, and communication so that medical visits, hospital stays, or Emergency Department access are easier and less stressful.

Check the websites of the ASST hospitals to know where DAMA is available. This will help you plan and make healthcare easier for the people you support.

For more information, consult the website of the ASST you intend to contact.

- Accessible services during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games

To make the Games inclusive and accessible for spectators with visual, hearing, or intellectual disabilities, each venue will offer special services and trained staff ("facilitators"). These services help everyone enjoy the events and ceremonies safely and comfortably.

The services include:

### **a) Audio description for people with visual disabilities**

Blind and visually impaired spectators can listen to a clear, neutral description of what is happening during the event. This helps them follow the competition better.

### **b) Remote Sign Language Interpreting**

Help desks in the Olympic venues will offer remote Sign Language interpreting. You can use it through your smartphone, tablet or computer to communicate with staff.

### **c) Quiet Rooms for people with intellectual disabilities or sensory sensitivities**

Some venues will have Quiet Rooms—calm spaces where people can rest if noises, lights, crowds, or strong sensory stimulation cause stress. These rooms help visitors feel safe and comfortable.

Further information will be available on the STAI website [STAI \(Servizi per un Turismo Accessibile e Inclusivo\) seconda edizione – Sondrio e Pavia](#)

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HOST REGION

