



Introduction to the Aventino Medical Group



Personnel: Our office manager, Mariateresa Barbieri, has been working with us for more than 25 years and has developed the role of the medical secretary into a fine art. Under her leadership Margherita de Angelis and Catherine Deslandes in the morning, and Maura Pederiva in the afternoon, can not only take your appointments but help you out with a vast array of issues. Languages spoken: Italian, English, French, Spanish, Russian.

Visits: By appointment. Normally visits are scheduled when a slot is available, but in an emergency any patient we already know will be squeezed in on the same day. This can mean other patients with appointments have to wait at times, but we think that's a necessary tradeoff. Please try to give 24 hours notice when cancelling, so another patient can be given your slot.

Telephone calls: When with a patient, we ordinarily have the secretaries take messages and then we call back later. Please don't ask them to interrupt an examination unless it's really necessary. In an emergency you can call us at home, or enlist the secretary's help if it's during office hours. For non-emergency calls to the office, try to avoid the peak phone hours of 9-11 am and 2-5:30 pm.

Insurance: Please try to remember to bring the forms at the time of your appointment, when they're easiest to fill out. Excepting the special conventions some of us have with Van Breda and Highway to Health, you'll have to pay up front and get reimbursed.

Payment: We follow a policy of fees that are moderate in the expensive Italian context, and will scale down even those if you are really strapped. In return, we'd appreciate your paying on the spot, since we have no fancy billing system. Our office is not part of the National Health Service.

Pharmacies: Most pharmacies follow usual Italian shopping hours but some, including the Farmacia Santa Sabina at Viale Aventino 78c, are open 8:30 AM to 7:30 PM (8 in summer) without a break, and several (e.g. on Via Arenula) stay open all night. The pharmacist will normally give you back the prescription after filling it, so we write

your instructions in whatever language is best for you. Watch out when asking pharmacists for medical advice; they tend to be a bit free with medicines.

Special prescriptions: Almost all American and European medications are available here, though the brand name may be different. Not all pharmacies are fully stocked, so if you don't find something at one, try another. Be skeptical if a pharmacist says some medication is unavailable or "not made any more"; they may just be out of it. You can also ask them to look it up in their reference book (Informatore Farmaceutico) to see if there's another brand, or try the Vatican Pharmacy, which is accessible to anyone armed with a doctor's prescription.

Testing: Italian laboratories and consultants will by and large expect immediate cash payment; go prepared. Results are usually picked up by the patient rather than being sent to your physician, though several facilities may be willing to get results to us directly.

Health in Rome: Yes, you can drink the tap water—it's largely from deep springs. Infectious diseases, such as German measles (a concern for pregnancy), and hepatitis (watch out for raw shellfish) are more common here than at home. The Tiber is badly polluted, and the beaches nearest Rome are barely less so. Expect to get more colds than usual soon after arrival; you have to build up immunity to the local viruses. Likewise you may suffer from diarrhea while your intestine gets used to Italian varieties of bacteria and to all that olive oil. Birth control and abortions are legal here. Finally, Rome is the allergy capital of the world.

Mind and Soul: English-speakers in Rome can find a suicide hotline (the Samaritans, 800 860022), Alcoholics Anonymous (06 4742913), yoga instruction, Alexander technique, relaxation therapy, preparation for childbirth, and more. Don't hesitate to ask.

Welcome to Rome - and to our practice!
Rome, Italy, January 2011

Via Sant'Alberto Magno, 5
00153 Rome, Italy (Aventine hill)
tel./fax (06) 5728-8349 – 5780738
email info@aventinomedicalgroup.com

hours: Monday–Friday 9 am – 7:30 pm
Saturday by appointment
www.aventinomedicalgroup.com