

**Culture Report**

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N432 Maternal-Newborn Care

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February 2, 2022

## Italian Culture

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In Champaign County, there are approximately 204,214 people. Of those, approximately 6,072 people come from Italian ancestry. This number of people comes out to be about 2.97% of the population in Champaign County. Italians have a rich heritage in art, history, religion, cuisine, architecture, and fashion (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). These cultural legacies have profoundly influenced the Western cultural tradition that we are familiar with today (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.).

Roman Catholic traditions greatly influence Italian culture. Italy gave up Catholicism as a state religion in 1984 to maintain a divide between religion and law (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). Due to the legislation not allowing the Italian government to track its citizen's religious affiliations, they only give approximate percentages (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). The government estimates that 83.3% of Italians identify as Catholics, 12.4% do not follow a religion, and a smaller portion of the Italian population follows other religions (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.).

Male providers are allowed to care for female patients in the Italian culture. There will be a female nurse in the room and a male provider during a visit. The female nurse helps ensure that the patient is comfortable during the exam (Nencini et al., 2020).

In the Italian culture, the representation of pain relates to medical knowledge and functional aspects of the health practice (Nencini et al., 2020). Other forms of pain, such as psychological or emotional, are believed not to be managed with the traditional tools of the health practice and are not perceived to be dealt with the professionals' competence (Nencini et al., 2020).

"One tradition is known as "Camino Della Fortuna" in Italy. It is a jacket for the baby given to the mother to be after her third month of pregnancy. It is made of either silk or cotton and most commonly is white. It is worn right after birth as it brings good luck. It gets passed on by a friend or family member whose baby wore it. Once worn, they put it away unwashed until it is time to pass it on to the next lucky mom" (Boggan, 2021).

Family is one of the most critical aspects of Italian culture. Italians believe in family emotional and economic support, so family typically forms their social circle (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). Even when the children leave home, the family typically stays in touch and gets together as often as possible. Italian women are encouraged to be independent starting at a young age even though society is still male-dominated (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). "Traditionally, a woman was expected to fulfill roles of matrimony and motherhood. Today, most Italian women receive a high level of education and work to contribute to the household income; however, women are still responsible for the majority of the household duties" (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.).

Italians have great respect for the elderly in their communities. Senior family members are significant to their children and grandchildren. In the Italian culture, elders expect their children to support and assist them with daily living activities when needed. Nursing homes are damaging in Italian culture, and elderly Italians apply moral pressure and guilt on their children to stay out of them (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.).

Italians are typically loud and do not like extended periods of silence. Italians tend to be open about their emotions and speak clearly about their point, so they generally expect similar honesty from their conversation partner (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). Women are allowed to have conversations and are encouraged to interact independently.

Italians are social people, and they tend to be very direct in what they say. Knowing that Italians are social people, we can assume that they use many verbal and nonverbal communication forms. They

stand close to one another, show affection in public, eye contact is expected, and use many hand gestures when talking (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.).

Breakfast is not typically a big deal in Italian culture, and it is often skipped over (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). Traditionally, Italians used to eat lunch together as a family whenever they could, but that is hard to do now with the different schedules (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). When eating, it is not common to drink anything other than wine or water with the meal (*Italian Culture - Core Concepts*, n.d.). Mealtimes are important in Italian culture because they enjoy time with family.

There are no specific foods that Italians eat after the birth of a child, but they do celebrate with the family as a whole when they get home.

There are no specific dietary requirements in the Italian culture. If a patient has specific requirements, it could be hard to accommodate their needs during the stay.

### References

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