

# Bleeding Disorders in Women

Questions and answers for newly diagnosed women

## What is a bleeding disorder?

A bleeding disorder occurs when a person's blood does not clot (stop bleeding) properly. Blood clotting involves both blood cells called platelets and several proteins called clotting factors. A diagnosis of a bleeding disorder means that either the platelets or clotting factors are not working correctly, or there is a shortage of platelets or clotting factors. The most common bleeding disorder in women is von Willebrand Disease (vWD). Although there are several types of vWD, persons with the most common type produce less than normal amounts of vWD factor. In the other (less common) forms, either no factor is made or the factor is made but does not work properly.

## What are the symptoms of a bleeding disorder?

The signs and symptoms of bleeding disorders vary from person to person and vary depending upon the disorder. The symptoms can include

- heavy bleeding during monthly periods (menorrhagia),
- unusual bleeding after injury or surgery,
- bleeding from small cuts that starts and stops over several hours,
- frequent or prolonged nosebleeds, and
- unusual bleeding from the mouth or gums or after a tooth extraction.

## Will I pass this on to my children?

Perhaps. Some bleeding disorders such as vWD are inherited and can be passed on to a child.

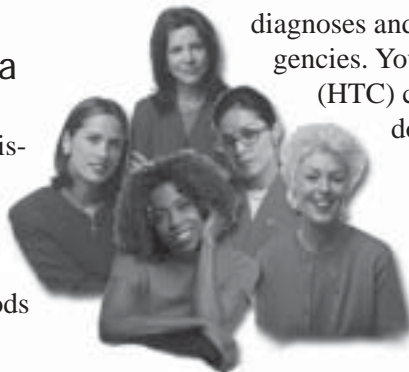
## How are bleeding disorders treated?

Bleeding disorders are treated based on their type. Conditions causing minor bleeding may require no treatment. However, preventing or treating more severe

bleeding problems, such as heavy periods or excessive bleeding during dental or surgical procedures, requires the use of medications. Healthcare providers, who are experts in treating bleeding disorders, can help find the best treatment and management options for you.

## Is there information I need to share about my bleeding disorder with other healthcare providers?

It is very important to share your diagnosis with your healthcare providers, especially before dental procedures, surgery, and pregnancy and childbirth. Some women wear Medic Alert bracelets that outline their diagnoses and treatment options in case of emergencies. Your local hemophilia treatment center (HTC) can help you inform and educate your doctors about any special healthcare needs you may have because of your bleeding disorder.



## What are HTCs, and why do I need to seek their services? Can't my primary doctor manage my care?

HTCs are medical facilities in which a team of healthcare providers who are experts in diagnosing and treating bleeding disorders provide comprehensive care for people with such disorders. Comprehensive care means that the team works with you to develop an individual treatment plan, provide support, and help you coordinate your care with other healthcare providers.

## Where can I find more information?

The National Hemophilia Foundation operates an information clearing house, HANDI, that can provide more information about women with bleeding disorders. You can visit their website: [www.hemophilia.org](http://www.hemophilia.org) or call 1-800-42-HANDI.

Department of Health and Human Services



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention