

## Von Willebrand's disorder

Von Willebrand's disorder (VWD) is an inherited condition caused by problems with von Willebrand's factor. People with the disorder may have frequent nosebleeds, easy bruising, heavy menstruation (periods) and/or excessive bleeding from the mouth.

### A bleeding disorder that affects men and women

When you cut yourself, your body plugs up the wound with a blood clot. One of the essential factors used to form a blood clot - von Willebrand's factor - is missing in a person with VWD. This factor acts like glue so, when it is missing, blood clots cannot 'stick' together. This means they are prone to bleeding.

### Symptoms

Many people with VWD do not have any symptoms. Those who do may find that they:

- Have lots of nosebleeds
- Bruise easily
- Have heavy menstrual (period) flow
- Bleed excessively from the mouth.

### VWD is inherited

VWD is an inherited condition. A parent with VWD has a 50 per cent chance of passing the affected gene on to each child. It is not attached to the X chromosome. This means that VWD can affect both men and women.

Sometimes genes mutate or change. A child may have VWD where there was no history of the condition in the family. This means that VWD can occur in any family.

### VWD is more common but less severe than haemophilia

VWD can be so mild that people do not know they have the condition until they have surgery or a major accident. Many people go through life without knowing they have the condition.

### Types of VWD

There are three main types of VWD:

- Type 1
- Type 2
- Type 3.

These can be broken down into further categories. The most common are types 2A and 2B.

### Issues for women with VWD

Women with VWD may find their periods last longer and may be heavier than other women's.

### Pregnancy and VWD

Pregnancy and childbirth is not usually a problem because most women's von Willebrand factor levels rise during pregnancy. It is wise to mention your VWD to your obstetrician early in the pregnancy. This means you can be prepared - just in case.

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your nearest Haemophilia Centre
- Your State or Territory Haemophilia Foundation
- Haemophilia Foundation Australia Tel. 1800 807 173

## Things to remember

- VWD is an inherited condition that affects males and females.
- A person with VWD is missing one essential blood clotting factor.
- Women should tell their obstetrician if they have VWD early in the pregnancy.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Haemophilia Foundation Victoria

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