

What Are Blood Clotting Disorders?

Blood clotting disorders are problems in the body's ability to control how blood clots. They are sometimes called coagulation disorders or thrombophilias. Normally, blood clots form during an injury to prevent bleeding. When a blood vessel is damaged, the body begins a process called coagulation. This process thickens the blood into a mass, called a clot, to stop the bleeding. If you have a clotting disorder, your blood may not clot enough, which can lead to too much bleeding, or your blood may form clots even without an injury.

Types

Blood clotting disorders are either inherited, meaning you are born with the disorder, or acquired, meaning it develops during your life. Just because you have a blood clotting disorder does not mean that you will develop blood clots. But it does increase your chance of having blood clots throughout your lifetime.

Common inherited blood clotting disorders include:

- Factor V Leiden mutation
- Prothrombin G20210A mutation



Rare inherited blood clotting disorders include:

- Deficiencies in blood clotting proteins called protein C, protein S, and antithrombin
- Hyperhomocysteinemia
- Sticky platelet syndrome

Acquired blood clotting disorders include:

- Antiphospholipid syndrome, which is the most common acquired clotting disorder
- Disseminated intravascular coagulation, which is caused by an infection (such as sepsis) or an injury

Symptoms

Blood clotting disorders that cause your blood to clot more than normal can be very serious. You may experience different symptoms depending on which part of your body is affected by the blood clot.



Visit your doctor if you have:

- **Swollen and tender legs that are painful to the touch**, which may be due to blood clots that block blood flow to the veins in your legs (called [deep vein thrombosis](#))
- **Shortness of breath and chest pain**, which may be due to a blood clot that travels to the lungs (called a [pulmonary embolism](#))

Less common, but just as serious, are blood clots that form in the arteries. These can lead to a heart attack or stroke. Learn the symptoms of a [heart attack](#) and warning signs of a [stroke](#).

You may have other symptoms, such as bruising easily or often or experiencing extreme tiredness.

Diagnosis and Treatment

To find out if you have a blood clotting disorder, your doctor will review your symptoms and your medical and family history. Your doctor may also do blood and genetics tests. Sometimes certain medicines can affect blood test results, so be sure to tell the doctor about any over-the-counter medicines you take.

Some people with blood clotting disorders may never get blood clots and may not need treatment. If you have a history of blood clots, your doctor may prescribe blood thinners. Your doctor will test your blood often to make sure the dose of medicine is correct and that your blood has the proper balance between bleeding and clotting.

If you have frequent blood clots, your doctor may recommend that you see a hematologist — a doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating blood diseases and disorders.

Pregnancy and Blood Clots

Women are five times more likely to have a blood clot during pregnancy or right after delivery than someone who is not pregnant.

Some blood clotting disorders, such as antiphospholipid syndrome, can raise the risk of blood clots during pregnancy even more. This is especially true if you have a history of blood clots. Talk with your doctor if you have a blood clotting disorder and are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

If you are trying to prevent pregnancy, talk with your doctor about birth control options without estrogen. Birth control with estrogen can raise your risk of blood clots.



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Learn more at nhlbi.nih.gov/health/clotting-disorders



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