

What Are Bleeding Disorders?

A bleeding disorder is a health problem that makes it difficult to stop blood loss due to an injury or illness. When a blood vessel is damaged, the body begins a process called coagulation. This thickens the blood into a mass called a clot to stop the bleeding. If your blood does not clot normally, you may bleed too much after an injury or surgery.

Clotting factors, also called coagulation factors, are proteins in the blood that work with small cells, called platelets, to form blood clots. Any problem that affects the function or number of clotting factors or platelets can lead to a bleeding disorder.

Causes and Risk Factors

Bleeding disorders are either inherited, meaning you are born with the disorder, or acquired, meaning it develops during your life. Acquired bleeding disorders are more common. You may develop a bleeding disorder if something in your body, such as a disease or a medicine, causes your body to stop making blood clotting factors or causes them to stop working correctly.

You may have an increased risk for bleeding disorders because of your age, family history and genetics, certain diseases or medical conditions, or medicines you take. Your sex also impacts your risk: A bleeding disorder called hemophilia is more common in men, but women are at increased risk of acquired hemophilia during and after pregnancy. Women with bleeding disorders have unique needs, especially during pregnancy.

Types

Acquired bleeding disorders include:

- Disseminated intravascular coagulation, a rare but serious condition that causes abnormal blood clotting throughout the body's blood vessels
- Liver disease-associated bleeding
- Vitamin K deficiency bleeding
- [Von Willebrand disease \(VWD\)](#) and hemophilia, which are typically inherited but may develop as a result of a medical condition
- Other, rarer types of acquired bleeding disorders, which include deficiencies of certain clotting factors
- Rarely, tangles of blood vessels, called arteriovenous malformations, which can form in the brain or elsewhere in the body and lead to bleeding before birth or later in life

Inherited bleeding disorders include:

- Combined deficiency of the vitamin K-dependent clotting factors
- Hemophilia A (the most common type of hemophilia), hemophilia B, or hemophilia C
- VWD, the most common inherited bleeding disorder
- Hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia, a rare inherited condition caused by tangled blood vessels in various parts of the body, which can lead to bleeding



Symptoms

Symptoms may differ depending on the type, cause, and severity of the bleeding disorder. They can include easy bruising, heavy menstrual periods, blood in urine or stool, and excessive bleeding that does not stop with pressure and may start spontaneously, such as nosebleeds that happen often. People who have a mild bleeding disorder may not have any signs or symptoms until they sustain an injury or have a medical procedure.

Diagnosis and Treatment

It may be possible for your doctor to diagnose your bleeding disorder, its severity, and whether it is inherited or acquired based on your symptoms, risk factors, medical and family history, a physical exam, and blood tests. Treatment for bleeding disorders will vary depending on the type of disorder and may include medicines and factor replacement therapy. Your treatment may be every day to prevent bleeding episodes, or as needed when you plan for surgery or have an accident. You may not need treatment if your bleeding disorder is mild.

Living With a Bleeding Disorder

Although bleeding disorders can affect your health in many ways, you can work with your doctor to stay safe and to prevent and treat complications. Follow your medical plan, receive routine care, and tell your doctor about any changes in your symptoms. Talk to your doctor about what to do in an emergency. You should also discuss potential risks and complications for any surgeries you may need and what medicines are safe for you to take. Some medicines, such as aspirin or other pain relievers, increase the risk of bleeding.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is especially important if you have a bleeding disorder. Choosing healthy foods,



If you have a child with a bleeding disorder, talk with your child's healthcare team or a bleeding disorders treatment center about ways to protect your child at home and school.

maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, managing stress, and not smoking can help improve your overall health and reduce your risk of heart disease, which is more difficult to manage if you have a bleeding disorder. By adopting a healthy lifestyle, you can help take control of your well-being and manage your condition.

Everyone's health needs are unique, so it's essential to consult with your doctor for personalized advice based on your specific bleeding disorder and overall health status.



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

