

Quick Briefing

Haemophilia & von Willebrand's Disease

Haemophilia, von Willebrand's and related bleeding disorders are conditions where the blood doesn't clot properly.

Haemophilia is the most well-known bleeding disorder but is not as common as von Willebrand's which is believed to affect 1% of the population, many of whom don't realise they have it.

Condition	Number Diagnosed
Haemophilia A	6,845
Haemophilia B	1,500
von Willebrand's Disease	9,242
Rarer Disorders	3,440
Platelet Disorders	1,828
TOTAL in UK with any bleeding disorder	22,855

Figures from the UKHCDO March 2011

You can't 'catch' haemophilia or von Willebrand's from other people - they are inherited bleeding disorders.

Haemophilia affects mostly males, von Willebrand's affects men and women equally.

Internal bleeds into the joints, muscles and other tissues are the most serious problem for people with bleeding disorders - if left untreated they cause severe pain, arthritis, joint damage and disability.

A small cut doesn't mean that a person with a bleeding disorder will bleed to death - it just takes longer to stop the bleeding.

Women who carry the haemophilia gene may have symptoms, such as heavy periods and complications with childbirth; as can women with von Willebrand's.

There is no cure for either haemophilia or von Willebrand's; with modern treatment both conditions can be managed allowing affected people to live their lives as normally as possible.

In the past many people with haemophilia were infected with hepatitis, some also with HIV, via contaminated blood products. From 1985, virus inactivation processes and later the use of recombinant (genetically engineered treatment) have eliminated these infections.

In the 1800s haemophilia affected many members of the royal families of England, Spain, Germany and Russia. Those affected were direct descendents of Queen Victoria, the first known haemophilia carrier in her family.

Other rarer bleeding disorders

Acquired haemophilia - this is very rare and happens when the body's own immune system develops antibodies which attack factor VIII in a person with no history of a bleeding disorder. There are around two new cases per million of the population each year.

Factor I (1) deficiency - Fibrinogen deficiency

Factor II (2) deficiency - usually called Prothrombin deficiency

Factor V (5) deficiency - also known as Owren's disease and parahaemophilia

Factor VII (7) deficiency - also called Alexander's disease

Factor X (10) deficiency - also known as Stuart-Prower deficiency

Factor XI (11) deficiency - also known as haemophilia C

Factor XII (12) deficiency - sometimes called Hageman factor

Factor XIII (13) deficiency

Glanzman's thrombasthenia - affects both men and women; bruising, nosebleeds and mouth bleeds can occur and can be severe

Bernard-Soullier Syndrome - this inherited bleeding disorder affects men and women; there is a problem with the platelets which lack the ability to adhere to the walls of injured blood vessels

Related Links

- [UKHCDO](#)

[Detailed UK Statistics](#)

The United Kingdom Centre Doctors' Organisation (UKHCDO) publish details statistics on bleeding disorders every year. Follow this link to find out more.

For more information, please contact [Dan Farthing](#).

Related Links

- [Detailed information about bleeding disorders.](#)
- [Information about the contaminated blood campaign](#)