

Resources

National Hemophilia Foundation

<https://www.hemophilia.org/bleeding-disorders-a-z/types/von-willebrand-disease>

An informational resource on all bleeding disorders, including von Willebrand Disease.

Boston Hemophilia Center

childrenshospital.org/bostonhemophiliacenter

The BHC provides education and resources for patients and families with bleeding disorders.

Let's Talk Period

letstalkperiod.ca

This site aims to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of bleeding disorders. Patients can complete a self-administered bleeding assessment tool.

Victory for Women

victoryforwomen.org

Celebrates the voices of women in the bleeding disorders community. It's a place for you to share your creative expression of all kinds

Visit us

The Women's Bleeding & Clotting Disorders Program

850 Boylston Street, Suite 402

Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

Phone: 617-732-6089



The Women's Bleeding and Clotting Disorders Program



Brigham and Women's Hospital

Founding Member, Mass General Brigham



Heavy Periods and Von Willebrand Disease

Von Willebrand Disease & Heavy Periods

What is von Willebrand disease (VWD)?

Our bodies use blood cells called platelets to plug up holes to prevent bleeding when a blood vessel gets injured. A protein called von Willebrand factor helps platelets stick to each other and the injured area. When von Willebrand factor is low or doesn't work, that makes platelets unable to do their job well and is called von Willebrand disease (VWD). VWD is inherited.

What is a heavy period?

A lot of people don't know what a normal amount of period bleeding is because we don't talk a lot about it. A period is considered heavy if: you soak a pad or tampon in less than 2 hours, feel a gushing of blood, pass blood clots bigger than a quarter, or have bleeding that lasts more 7 days. If you aren't sure, you should talk to your gynecologist, primary care doctor or hematologist. Not all heavy periods are from VWD.

Are heavy periods common with VWD?

Yes! Heavy periods are the most common symptom from VWD. Not all people with VWD have heavy periods, and some people don't realize their periods are heavier than average.

What are complications of heavy periods?

Heavy periods can interfere with school, work, and social life because of the need to interrupt what you are doing to deal with the bleeding. Heavy periods can also lead to anemia (low blood count) and low iron, which can cause fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath and decreased ability to exercise.

Anemia

I have anemia (low blood counts) from heavy periods, what can I do?

Usually, anemia in this instance is from low iron. If that is the case, iron pills can help. If pills aren't enough or are hard to take because of nausea or constipation, ask your hematologist about iron infusions. You don't have to be stuck with iron deficiency just because you have heavy periods.

Treatments & Contraception

What types of contraception (birth control) are safe with VWD?

Every type of contraception is safe for patients with VWD! Generally, we recommend avoiding a copper intrauterine device (IUD) because this often makes periods heavier.

What medications can I use to reduce my periods?

All forms of hormonal contraception (birth control) including estrogen-containing pills, progesterone only pills, implants, shots and hormonal IUDs can decrease period bleeding in patients with VWD. A hematologist can also help you with medications such as tranexamic acid (brand name Lysteda) or aminocaproic acid (brand name Amicar). These work by helping blood clots "stick" as they form to reduce period flow.

I don't want to be on any hormones, am I stuck with heavy periods?

If you don't want to or cannot be on hormonal medications, we can use tranexamic acid or aminocaproic acid. These can reduce period bleeding. They are also used for other bleeding from VWD.