

von willebrand disease

what is von Willebrand factor?

Von Willebrand factor is one of many factors that help your blood clot. We often refer to von Willebrand factor as “glue” because it helps platelets stick together. This forms a platelet plug (or clot) at where there are injured blood vessels.

what is von Willebrand disease?

Von Willebrand disease (vWD) is a genetic disorder that causes prolonged bleeding. In people with vWD, they do not make enough Von Willebrand factor, have an issue making Von Willebrand factor, or their Von Willebrand factor does not work correctly. vWD is the most common bleeding disorder worldwide. It affects 1-3% of people.

what causes von Willebrand disease?

Most cases of von Willebrand are passed down from one or both parents (inherited). There are a small number of vWD cases where there is no known genetic link. There are three types of vWD.

- **Type 1:** This is the mildest and most common type. With this type, people produce less von Willebrand factor, but the small amount works normally.
- **Type 2:** With this type, people make plenty of von Willebrand factor, but it doesn't work properly. There are multiple variants of Type 2.
- **Type 3:** Severe vWD, and very rare. With this type, there is very little to no von Willebrand factor, along with low factor VIII levels.

what are the symptoms of von Willebrand disease?

Symptoms and severity of symptoms can vary greatly from person to person.

- Frequent and long-lasting nosebleeds
- Gum bleeding
- Easy bruising
- Heavy menstrual periods
- Post-partum bleeding
- Long-lasting bleeding after surgery or dental procedures
- Some people can have more serious bleeding such as bleeding into the joints, bleeding in the stomach, intestines and urogenital tract.

how is von Willebrand disease diagnosed?

- Collect a thorough family bleeding history
- Collect a thorough patient bleeding history
- Series of blood tests

how is von Willebrand disease treated?

Regular treatment is usually not necessary for Type 1 or Type 2 patients. In these patients, a von Willebrand factor replacement product or Desmopressin is used to prevent or treat bleeding as needed. Antifibrinolytics (medicines that help stop the body from dissolving clots) such as Amicar can help control symptoms. Women with heavy menstrual cycles can use birth control pills or intrauterine device to control the bleeding.

how do I manage my von Willebrand Disease?

vWD patients can suffer life-threatening bleeds from head injuries, abdominal injuries, surgery, and in the postpartum period.

- Seek treatment as soon as possible for injuries, and coordinate care with your hematologist.
- Coordinate care with your hematologist before all surgical/dental procedures and as soon as possible during pregnancy.
- Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS): These include ibuprofen (Motrin and Advil), aspirin, and naproxen sodium (Aleve) as these can prolong bleeding.
- Avoid high risk activities/sports that can lead to trauma and severe bleeding such as football, ice hockey, boxing, lacrosse, wrestling.
 - Check your safe sport handout to find safer activity. Regular exercise keeps joints and muscles strong and healthy.
- Wear or carry your medical alert bracelet or necklace.
- Keep up to date on hepatitis A and B vaccines
- See a dentist regularly and brush and floss. Good oral hygiene cuts down on bleeding from your mouth and gums.
- Avoid medications and supplements that increase bleeding
- Wear helmets and other protective equipment when biking, on a scooter or skateboard.
- Wear a seatbelt when in a motor vehicle.

Notify our office at 937-641-3111 if you are scheduled for dental or surgical procedures ahead of time. We will coordinate care and infusions with the provider.

