

Von Willebrand Disease and Platelet Disorders

- Von Willebrand Disease (VWD) is the most common bleeding disorder. VWD is believed to affect one out of every hundred people.
- VWD affects males and females equally.
- Von Willebrand Factor is a clotting protein produced in cells that line blood vessels. This factor is slowly released into the blood stream. VWD is caused when the factor doesn't work correctly or there is not enough of it.
- There are several common symptoms of VWD. These include frequent and prolonged nosebleeds, easy bruising, bleeding gums, and prolonged bleeding after dental work or surgery. Women and girls may have heavy menstrual bleeding.
- There are three main types of VWD. Type 1 is the mildest and most common form. Type 2 is subdivided into type 2A or 2B. In type 2 von Willebrand Factor is produced but does not work efficiently. Type 3 is the rarest. It causes severe muscle, joint, and other spontaneous bleeds. People with this type do not produce any von Willebrand Factor. They usually have low levels of Factor VIII as well.
- There is no cure for VWD but it can be treated. Minor bleeds, such as nosebleeds, are usually managed by putting pressure on the bridge of the nose for 10-15 minutes. Putting ice on the back of the neck also helps.
- Most types of VWD can be treated with a synthetic hormone called Desmopressin Acetate (DDAVP). This medicine can be given by IV or in a nasal spray. The nasal spray is called Stimate®. In some people with VWD, DDAVP does not work. In these cases, the treatment may include clotting factor concentrate. This medicine may be used to treat or prevent bleeding.
- Young women who have VWD can have menstrual bleeding that lasts for several days to weeks. Sometimes this is managed with oral estrogens or Stimate® nasal spray.
- VWF levels vary with stress, hormone fluctuations, hyperthyroidism, surgery, or trauma.
- Any invasive procedure, such as stitches, dental work, or surgery may require a treatment plan from a hematologist prior to the procedure to prevent serious bleeding.