

## What is VWD?

Von Willebrand disease -  
what is it and who does it affect?



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### What is VWD?

Von Willebrand disease (VWD) is a bleeding disorder in which people do not have enough of a protein called von Willebrand factor in their blood or the von Willebrand factor does not work properly. Because of these problems, it takes longer for bleeding episodes to stop.



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### How common is VWD?

VWD is the most common bleeding disorder worldwide.

Most people with VWD have a mild form with few symptoms. In comparison to the number of people with the mild form of VWD, the form of VWD causing moderate bleeding is uncommon, and the severe form is rare.

💡 More than 2,300 people have been diagnosed with VWD in Australia but many others are thought to be undiagnosed.



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### Does 'mild' mean few bleeding episodes?

Not always. With all forms of VWD there can be bleeding problems. Some people with the mild form bleed quite often, eg with nosebleeds, bruising and heavy periods.

A smaller number of people have the severe form of VWD and may also experience joint and muscle bleeds, similar to haemophilia.

**Any bleeding that occurs with VWD needs to be assessed and treated.**



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### What are the symptoms of VWD?

VWD symptoms vary, even in the same family, and may include:

- frequent nose and gum bleeds
- easy bruising
- heavy menstrual periods
- prolonged bleeding after injury and trauma, childbirth, dental extractions and surgery.

When people have the severe form of VWD, they may also have bleeding into joints and muscles.



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### Is VWD only an inherited condition?

There is not always a family history.

Some people have VWD because there was a mutation or change in the von Willebrand factor gene during their foetal stage.

When this happens, the gene change can be passed on from the person to their children like someone who has inherited the condition.

VWD can also be acquired rather than inherited, but this is very rare.



### Learn more about VWD

For more information about VWD, including inheritance, treatment, living well and special issues for women and girls, visit the HFA website:

[haemophilia.org.au/vwd](https://haemophilia.org.au/vwd)

