

SAMHS INFO BULLETIN

Compiled by Corporate Communication



WORLD HAEMOPHILIA DAY 17 APRIL

Haemophilia is an inherited bleeding disorder that occurs likely in males than females. Blood contains many proteins, called clotting factors, which work to stop bleeding. People with haemophilia have a low level or absence of one of these clotting factors in their blood.

Deficiency in coagulation factor VIII is the most common cause.

The lack of clotting factor causes people with haemophilia to bleed for longer periods of time than people whose blood factor levels are normal. People with haemophilia do not bleed faster than other people, but may bleed for days from a minor cut or injury. The main problem for people with haemophilia is bleeding internally, mainly into muscles and joints.

Symptoms of Haemophilia

- Bleeding into joints (knees, elbows, ankles, shoulders, hips, wrists in descending order of frequency)
- Bleeding into soft tissues and muscles (the ileopsoas muscle around the hip, calf, forearm, upper arm, Achilles tendon, buttocks)
- Bleeding in the mouth from a cut, bitten tongue or loss of a tooth (especially in children)
- Blood in the urine (hematuria)
- Surface bruising.

Treatment

- There's no cure for haemophilia and, although patients are treated with injections of the missing clotting factor, there's no permanent way of increasing its level.

- In severe haemophilia injections may be given on a regular basis several times a week. This is called prophylaxis, and it aims to help prevent bleeding from happening. In mild or moderate haemophilia injections are given just when a bleed has or may have occurred (this is called on-demand therapy).
- If a person known to have haemophilia has a bleed, immediate measures - such as resting quietly and splinting the joint or limb - will reduce the amount of blood lost.
- If someone you know is a haemophiliac, it's worth checking with them about what they need and where their local supply and treatment centres are in case of emergency.
- Preventive exercises for people affected by haemophilia are aimed at strengthening the joints, particularly the elbow, knees and ankles. These exercises are also recommended after an internal bleed occurred.

Approved By:

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