



What Is a Bleeding Disorder?

If you have a **bleeding disorder**, you already know that there is a problem with your blood; it might be a problem with your red or white blood cells, platelets, blood vessels, bone marrow, lymph nodes, or the proteins involved in

bleeding and clotting. Depending on the type of bleeding disorder you have, your doctor may want you to see a **gynecologist** – a doctor who cares for women and girls' reproductive systems.

Why Do I Need to See a Gynecologist?

Some girls with bleeding disorders have very heavy menstrual bleeding and/or pain. Your hematologist may want you to see a gynecologist to make sure your reproductive system is healthy. Most girls usually visit a gynecologist between the ages of 13-15 years, but if you have a bleeding disorder, are sexually active, or if you have pelvic pain or irregular bleeding, you may need to have your first exam earlier. That doesn't mean there's anything wrong! It is just to make sure you receive the best treatment to control your bleeding and help you and your body feel better.

What Will the Doctor Ask Me?

At your visit, your doctor will ask you a lot of questions. Some questions may be about your medical history, about your family's medical history, and past surgeries. Other questions may be personal, like questions about your period, and if you're sexually active. Remember: it's important to be honest. The more your doctor knows about you and your body, the more she knows how to help you. If you are afraid to tell the doctor anything because she might tell your family, she can tell you what she can keep confidential.

www.hog.org
www.fwgbd.org

For Girls with Bleeding Disorders: What to Expect During Your First Gynecological Exam



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What Will My Doctor Ask About My Period?

Your doctor will ask you lots of questions about your period. If you are having especially heavy bleeding with your period, you may want to use an app or take notes

before your visit, so you are able to tell her:

- At what age your period started
- When you last got your period (date)
- How often you get your period
- How many pads or tampons you use each day
- How painful your period is

What Questions Should I Ask the Doctor?

Before your visit, write down your questions and bring them with you. Tell your doctor you have some questions and want to ask them before your exam, especially if you are concerned about anything. You should feel free to ask the doctor anything you're worried about – there are no silly questions! Questions we've heard from others are:

- What can you do to help with my pain?
- What can you do to cut down on my bleeding?
- How and what do I tell friends about my bleeding?
- What should I tell my friends about hormonal therapy?
- Will I be able to go to school or go swimming?
- How do I manage my bleeding if I'm on a school sports team?
- Will I be able to get pregnant in the future?
- Do my future children need to worry about having this?
- Do I need to think about freezing my eggs now?

What Exams Will Be Performed?

During your visit, you may need to have certain exams. Most often, these exams are:

- a general physical exam (height, weight, etc.)
- an external genital exam
- an internal or bimanual exam

Usually, your doctor will do a physical exam, but may not need to do an internal or bimanual exam depending on your symptoms. If you're afraid or nervous, you can ask about the possibility of sedation. If you need have to have an internal exam, try to schedule it during the middle of your cycle, so your period is far away.

What Happens During the External Physical Examination?

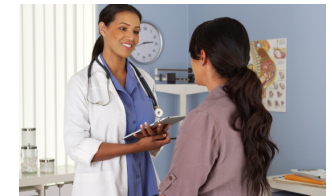
During this exam, you will sit on the exam table. Your doctor will put gloves on and feel your breasts and external genitalia (or *vulva*) to check for anything that seems abnormal. Unless you are sexually active, have changing or unusual symptoms, or bad pain or discharge, you may not need an internal exam.

What Happens During the Internal or Bimanual Exam?

If you do need an internal exam, your doctor will ask you to sit on the exam table and place your feet in the stirrups. Your doctor will gently insert their finger to locate your cervix and will insert a *lubricated speculum* (a small tool) into your vagina, clicking it open. The doctor will gently move it and look through it at the walls of your vagina. The speculum may feel cold and a little weird. If your doctor is doing a bimanual exam, they will insert one or two fingers into your vagina and place their hand on your stomach so they can feel your uterus and ovaries, helping them check for swelling or cysts.

Why Do I Need Hormonal Therapy?

Sometimes your doctor may put you on hormonal therapy such as pills, shots, an IUD or other methods to help control or reduce bleeding during your period. Though it can also be used as birth control, it's also hormonal therapy and using it doesn't mean you are sexually active; it is prescribed for many other medical reasons. Since hormonal therapy causes you to bleed less during your period, you are less likely to develop *anemia* (a low number of red blood cells that can make you feel tired and bruise easily). It's important to take your medication as prescribed, especially if you're prescribed pills. Many girls don't have side effects when taking hormonal therapy, but some notice irregular periods, mood changes, nausea, or headaches. If you are concerned about changes, talk to your doctor.



What Happens After My Appointment?

Your doctor will be in touch with the test results and medications they would like to prescribe and can answer any questions you have. They will also set up a follow-up appointment if needed. Unless something changes, you probably won't need another exam for another year.