

Physical Activity, Exercise, and Sport in Inherited Bleeding Disorders



Irish Haemophilia Society



Representing People Living With Haemophilia,
Von Willebrands & Other Related Bleeding Disorders

[Haemophilia.ie](https://haemophilia.ie)



Contents

Introduction	3
Understanding Bleeding Disorders	4
Bleeding & Physical Activity	5
Physical Activity, Exercise & Sport	6
Benefits of Physical Activity, Exercise & Sport for People with Bleeding Disorders	8
How Much Activity Should I Aim For?	11
How Hard Should It Feel?	12
Getting Started	13
New Activities, Preparation & Conditioning	17
Planning Your Activity	19
Recognising Bleeds & Injuries: What to Do	20
Returning to Activity After a Bleed or Injury	24
Physical Activity - Take Home Messages	27

Introduction

This booklet is designed to support people with inherited bleeding disorders to enjoy physical activity, exercise, and sport in ways that are practical, confidence-building, and safe. It is written primarily for people with bleeding disorders but may also be useful for parents and carers, teachers, school staff, coaches, exercise professionals, physiotherapists, and other healthcare professionals who are less familiar with these conditions.

The information is relevant to people with haemophilia A and B, von Willebrand disorder, rare bleeding disorders, women and girls with bleeding disorders, symptomatic carriers, and those with low clotting factor levels. Although bleeding disorders vary in cause, severity, bleeding pattern, and treatment, many of the same principles apply when physical activity, exercise, and sport are planned around the individual.

Advice regarding physical activity has changed considerably over time. In the past, people with bleeding disorders were often discouraged from participating in sport or vigorous activity. Advances in treatment and care now enable many people to take part safely and confidently when activities are appropriately chosen, planned, and supported.

Regular physical activity is recommended for people with inherited bleeding disorders. When activity is tailored to the individual and progressed gradually, it can improve joint and muscle health, strength, balance, fitness, confidence, independence, wellbeing, and quality of life, while helping to reduce pain. Research, particularly in haemophilia, supports the safety and benefits of appropriately planned exercise, with little or no increase in bleeding risk for many people. The principles of individual assessment, treatment optimisation, gradual progression, and early recognition of problems, are relevant across inherited bleeding disorders. For children, adolescents, and adults, movement, physical activity, exercise, and sport can play an important role in supporting health, function, participation, and wellbeing throughout life.

This booklet aims to help you consider your current level of activity, what you would like to achieve, and how to progress safely towards your goals. For some people, this may involve simple changes such as sitting less, walking, or using wheelchairs (wheeling) more, using stairs, or being more active during the day. For others, it may include structured exercise, rehabilitation, school PE, recreational activities, or sport. Understanding your starting point, including your diagnosis, treatment, joint and muscle health, fitness, skills, confidence and previous bleeding or injury history, can help you choose activities that suit you. It can also help to build confidence, recognise when to seek advice, and progress safely over time.



Understanding Bleeding Disorders

Bleeding disorders are lifelong conditions that affect the body's ability to form blood clots. This means bleeding may take longer to stop, or may be heavier or more prolonged than expected.

Examples of inherited bleeding disorders include:

- » Von Willebrand disorder
- » Haemophilia A and B
- » Platelet function disorders
- » Rare clotting factor deficiencies
- » Symptomatic carriers and people with low clotting factor levels

People with bleeding disorders can experience a wide range of symptoms. These vary from person to person and may change across the lifespan. These may include:

- » Bleeding into joints or muscles
- » Easy bruising or soft tissue bleeding
- » Heavy menstrual bleeding
- » Nosebleeds
- » Bleeding from the gums, mouth, or other mucosal areas
- » Prolonged or excessive bleeding after injury, surgery, dental work, or childbirth

Everyone's experience is different. A diagnosis or severity label alone does not fully predict what type of physical activity is suitable for a person, or how they may respond to exercise or sport. Planning should take account of several factors, including the person's treatment, bleeding history, joint and muscle health, fitness level, skills and the type, intensity, and setting of the activity.



Bleeding and Physical Activity

Physical activity is encouraged for people with inherited bleeding disorders. It may be useful to understand how bleeding related to activity may present, as this varies depending on the type of bleeding disorder and the individual.

- » Joint and muscle bleeds are more common in haemophilia, especially where management has not been fully optimised, but they can occur in other bleeding disorders.
- » Soft tissue bleeding, bruising, and injury-related bleeding can occur across all inherited bleeding disorders.
- » Some people may experience delayed or prolonged bleeding, particularly in von Willebrand disorder or platelet function disorders.
- » Early signs of a bleed may include unusual stiffness, reduced movement, heaviness, discomfort, warmth, or difficulty using the affected area, rather than obvious swelling.
- » Bleeding disorders affect people of all genders, although symptoms may not always be recognised equally. Women and girls, and symptomatic carriers, may experience heavy menstrual bleeding, fatigue, pain, or other bleeding symptoms which can affect confidence and participation. Recognising and managing these symptoms can help people stay active and take part with appropriate support.

Understanding how bleeding disorders vary from person to person can help individuals, families, teachers, coaches, and healthcare professionals choose activities, plan support, and recognise when advice may be needed.

The next section explains how being active can support joint health, physical function, confidence, participation and overall wellbeing.



Physical Activity, Exercise, and Sport

Physical activity, exercise, and sport all involve movement, but they are slightly different. Together, they describe a range of ways people with inherited bleeding disorders can be active in daily life. Understanding these terms can help people think more broadly about movement and recognise that being active does not have to mean taking part in organised sport.

Physical Activity

Physical activity means any movement of the body that uses energy. It includes everyday activities such as:

- » Active travel, such as walking, using a wheelchair, or cycling to work, school, or other places
- » Climbing stairs
- » Household chores
- » Gardening
- » Playing
- » Work-related movement

Key Message

Even small amounts of movement throughout the day can have a positive impact on health and can be a good place to start.

Exercise

Exercise is a planned type of physical activity that is usually done to improve or maintain fitness, health, strength, movement, or function.

Examples include:

- » Aerobic exercise, such as cycling, swimming, or running
- » Balance or flexibility exercises
- » Strength or resistance training
- » Rehabilitation or physiotherapy-based programmes

For people with inherited bleeding disorders, exercise can be adapted to suit individual needs, including joint and muscle health, fitness level, confidence, goals, bleeding history, and treatment.

Key Message

All forms of movement can support health and wellbeing for people with inherited bleeding disorders.

Being active does not have to involve sport to be beneficial.

Activity can take many forms and can be adapted across the lifespan.

Sport

Sport is a structured or organised form of physical activity. It may involve rules, skills, teamwork, or competition, but it can also be recreational or non-competitive. For many people, sport is also about friendship, enjoyment, teamwork, confidence, and feeling included. These benefits are important and should be considered alongside physical health and bleeding risk.

Examples of sports include:

- » Individual sports (e.g. athletics, swimming)
- » Team sports (e.g. hurling, basketball)
- » Recreational or non-competitive sports and activities

People with bleeding disorders take part in sport in many different ways. Participation depends on the person's interests, goals, experience, confidence, physical literacy, joint and muscle health, treatment, and access to appropriate support.

Key Message

Children and young people should be supported to take part in PE, sport, play and school activities.

Any necessary adaptations should aim to include the child, not exclude them.

Advice is available from the physiotherapist and healthcare team at your treatment centre.

Benefits of Physical Activity, Exercise, and Sport for People with Bleeding Disorders

Why Being Active Matters

Being physically active is important for everyone, including people with bleeding disorders. Regular physical activity of adequate duration and intensity may provide many health benefits, as outlined here:



Research, particularly in haemophilia, shows that well planned activity is safe and provides clear benefits, with little or no increase in bleeding risk for most people. Across inherited bleeding disorders, the key principles are to choose activities that suit the individual, build up gradually, plan treatment or support where needed, and seek advice when an activity is higher-risk, more demanding, contact/collision-based, or if you are unsure.

Even small increases in activity can make a difference, especially when they are built into everyday life and increased gradually over time.

Physical Literacy

Being active is not just about fitness. It is also about having the confidence, motivation, movement, skills, knowledge and understanding to value and take part in physical activity throughout life. You may hear this described as physical literacy. In simple terms, it includes:



- » Physical Competence – having the movement, skills, fitness, and physical ability to take part in a wide range of activities
- » Confidence – believing in yourself to try, to learn and to keep going

- » Motivation – the desire and positive attitude to be active and stay involved
- » Knowledge – understanding the benefits of physical activity, and how to be active safely and effectively
- » Understanding – valuing physical activity and knowing how it supports health, wellbeing and quality of life

These can be developed at any age and at any starting point.

Some people have had negative experiences with activity in the past, or may feel unsure where to start. With the right support, starting small, building gradually, choosing activities you enjoy and having positive experiences can help you improve skills and feel more confident over time.

Creating opportunities to take part in activity is important to build and maintain physical literacy throughout life.



How Much Activity Should I Aim For?

Being active throughout the week is important for health. The following information is based on World Health Organisation (WHO) Physical Activity Guidelines:

Adults

- » For many adults, a useful goal is to build towards at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week, such as brisk walking, cycling, or wheeling
- » This can be built up in small amounts, for example 10–30 minutes at a time, or shorter periods if that is your starting point
- » Try to include strengthening activities at least 2 days per week, where appropriate for you

Children and teenagers

- » Children and teenagers need more movement than adults. Where possible, aim for at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day.
- » Try to include strengthening activities and vigorous intensity activities at least 3 days per week

Everyone

- » Any movement is better than none. If you are not meeting these targets, start by doing small amounts, and gradually increase the amount, frequency, and intensity
- » Less sitting and more movement throughout the day is beneficial for everyone



© World Health Organization 2021

How Hard Should It Feel?

There are two very simple ways of judging effort:

1 The talk test:

Light activity:	You can talk and sing easily
Moderate activity:	You can talk, but not sing
Vigorous activity:	You can only say a few words at a time

Light to moderate activity is often a good starting point. As fitness, skills, and confidence improve, some people may progress to more vigorous activity or sport.

2 Effort Guide (0–10 scale):

0–2:	Very easy
3–4:	Light
5–6:	Moderate – often a useful starting level when beginning or returning to activity
7+:	Hard effort



Getting Started

Physical activity is recommended for children, adolescents and adults with inherited bleeding disorders. Starting or returning to activity can feel challenging, especially after pain, bleeds, injury, or negative experiences. Many people rebuild activity successfully by starting from their current level and progressing. Taking a well-planned approach may help you build confidence, improve fitness, and take part safely.

Starting With Your Baseline

Before making a major change, starting structured exercise, or returning after a bleed or injury, it can help to understand your starting point. Key things to consider include:

- » Your diagnosis and bleeding pattern
- » Your current treatment or bleeding management plan
- » Your joint and muscle health, including pain, stiffness, previous bleeds, or arthropathy
- » Your current fitness, strength, balance, and skill level
- » Your confidence, goals and previous experience with activity

For some people, especially those starting structured exercise, returning after injury, or planning higher-risk activity, a physiotherapist or healthcare professional with experience in bleeding disorders can help assess readiness for activity and guide progression. This may include:

- » Joint movement (range of motion)
- » Muscle strength
- » Balance and coordination
- » Confidence with movement

Why This Matters

Activity is most effective, enjoyable and safe when it is matched to the person's current fitness, joint and muscle health, treatment, bleeding history, confidence, and goals - not just their diagnosis.

Choosing and Planning the Right Activity

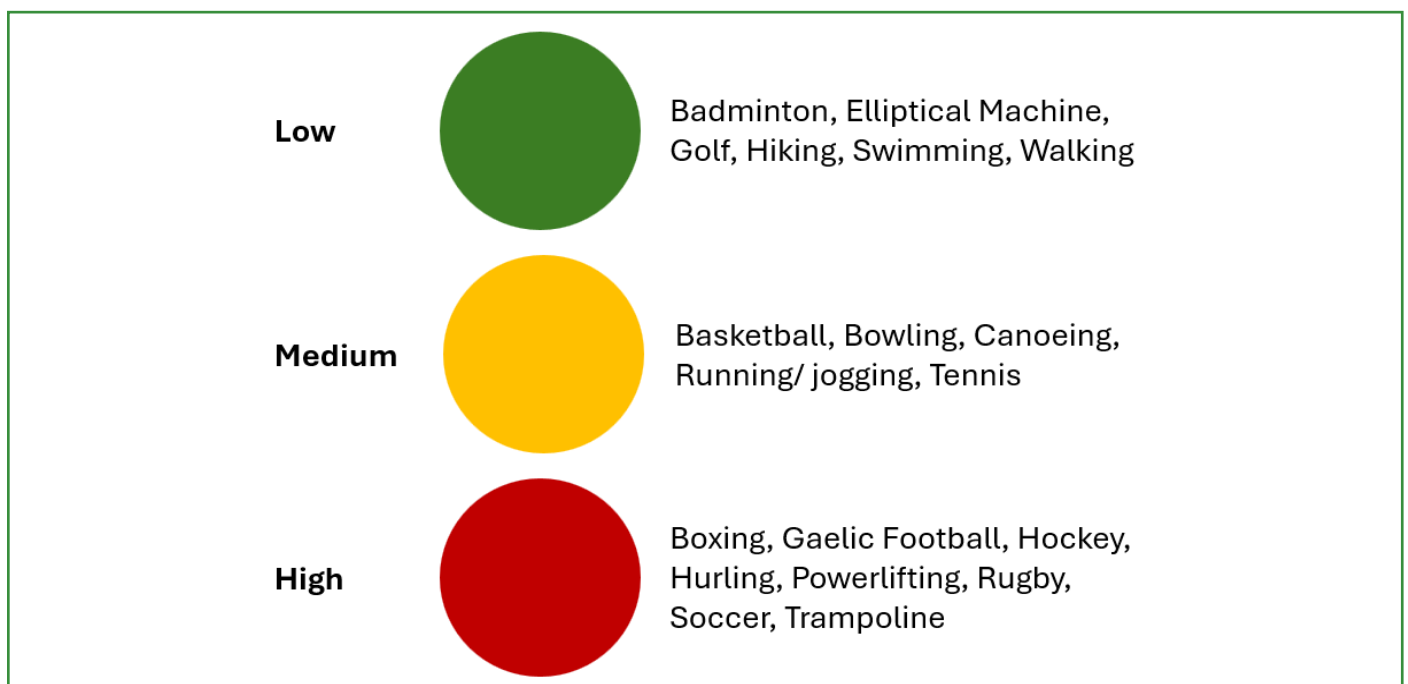
There are many ways to be active, from everyday movement such as walking, wheeling, gardening, or active play, to structured exercise, school PE, recreational activities, or organised sports such as hurling. Activities may need different levels of preparation, support, or planning, and this can vary from person to person. The aim of planning is to support participation - not to create unnecessary barriers to activity.

Understanding Risk

Planning is not about finding reasons to avoid activity. It is about helping each person take part in ways that suit their body, treatment, goals and confidence. The level of risk and support needed may depend on:

- » The type, intensity and setting of the activity
- » Your treatment or bleeding management plan
- » Your bleeding history
- » Your joint and muscle health
- » Your fitness, strength, skills and experience
- » Protective equipment, supervision and access to support if needed

Some activities may be grouped into lower, moderate, and higher risk categories. These are typically based on the level of speed and skill needed, as well as the risk of collision or injury associated with the activity. Some examples are provided below. More information can be found at www.stepsforliving.hemophilia.org.



The risk categories are starting points for discussion, not fixed rules, or automatic restrictions. The risk of an activity will also be affected by individual factors. For example, use of protective equipment and following your treatment plan may reduce risk; Presence of a target joint or arthropathy may increase risk.

Research, particularly in haemophilia, shows that with modern care and appropriate planning, many people can safely take part in a wide range of activities when these are suited to the individual.

For higher-impact, contact, collision, or more demanding activities, it can be helpful to discuss your goals with your treatment centre, so you plan how to take part as safely and confidently as possible.

Making Activity Work for You

When choosing an activity, consider:

- » What you enjoy
- » Your goals (e.g. fitness, social, sport)
- » Your current ability
- » What is available to you

The best activity for you is usually one that is:

- » Enjoyable
- » Accessible
- » Suited to your body, goals and routine
- » Something you can continue long term

Getting Support

Your bleeding disorder or haemophilia physiotherapist, healthcare team, or treatment centre can help you:

- » Choose the right activities
- » Assess your joint health and fitness
- » Support you in building a realistic, confidence-building, safe activity plan
- » Guide you as you progress

Key Principles for Getting Started

Starting at a manageable level and building up over time is one of the most effective ways to improve fitness, confidence, and participation while reducing the chance of setbacks:

- » Know your starting point.
- » Choose activities that suit your interests, goals, and body.
- » Start at a level that feels manageable.
- » Build up gradually.
- » Seek advice if symptoms change, if you are unsure how to progress, or if you want to try a higher-risk or more demanding activity.

Optimising Treatment Around Activity

Your treatment or bleeding management plan should support your ability to be active. How you plan your activity will depend on your diagnosis, bleeding pattern, treatment, activity goals and the type of activity you want to do.

If You Use Factor or Extended Half-Life (EHL) Treatment

- » Some people may be advised to plan higher risk or more demanding activities closer to their scheduled treatment
- » Extended half life treatments may provide more flexibility in activity planning for some people

If You Use Non Factor Therapy

- » Regular activity may not need to be timed around injections in the same way as factor treatment
- » Many everyday activities may not need extra treatment planning, depending on your own treatment plan. You should still know what to do after injury, breakthrough bleed, or unusual symptoms

If You Have von Willebrand disorder, a mild bleeding disorder, a rare bleeding disorder, or low clotting factor levels

- » Treatment plans can vary between individuals
- » Some people may only need extra planning, treatment or simple adaptations for certain higher-impact or more demanding activities
- » It is important to understand your own personalised treatment plan

Warm-Up & Cool-Down: Preparing Your Body for Activity

Warming up before activity and cooling down afterwards can help prepare your body for movement, improve comfort, support performance, and reduce the chance of injury.

Warm-Up (5–10 minutes)

A warm-up prepares your body for the activity ahead. It should:

- » Gradually increase your heart rate
- » Loosen your joints
- » Activate the muscles you will use

How to warm up

- » Start with light movement (e.g. walking or cycling)
- » Gradually increase the intensity
- » Move your joints through comfortable ranges
- » Include simple strengthening or activation exercises if needed
- » A simple approach is to start your activity slowly and build up to your normal pace
- » If you have a specific joint or muscle issue, you can include targeted exercises in your warm-up

Scan the QR code to watch our warm-up exercise videos or go to <https://haemophilia.ie/living-with-bleeding-disorders/sport-exercise/warm-up-exercise-videos/>



Cool-Down (5–10 minutes)

A cool-down helps your body return to a resting state after activity. It can:

- » Gradually lower your heart rate
- » Reduce stiffness and soreness
- » Support recovery

How to cool down

- » Slow your activity down gradually
- » Walk or move at an easy pace
- » Add gentle stretches for major muscle groups
- » Focus on relaxed breathing

New Activities, Preparation and Conditioning

When starting a new activity, preparation can help you feel ready, confident and comfortable while reducing the risk of injury or bleeding.

Everyone is different. The amount of preparation that is useful will depend on:

- » The activity you want to do
- » Your current fitness level
- » Your joint and muscle health
- » Your skills, confidence and goals
- » Your treatment or bleeding management plan

Before Starting a New Activity

It can help to:

- » Build strength around joints that may be vulnerable
- » Work on balance and coordination
- » Start with shorter, lower intensity sessions
- » Gradually increase your activity, allowing your body to adapt safely over time



Preparing Your Body (“Pre-Hab”)

This type of preparation is sometimes called pre-habilitation (or “pre-hab”). It means preparing your body before problems occur by:

- » Improving strength
- » Improving control and stability
- » Getting used to the movements required for your activity

Example:

If you are starting a new activity, such as tennis, it may help to:

- » Begin with light cardio such as walking, wheeling, cycling, or gentle jogging
- » Include simple upper and lower limb strengthening or control exercise
- » Start with short practice sessions before progressing
- » If you already play a similar sport, such as squash, you may need less preparation, but it is still important to build up gradually

Key Message

Preparing your body before starting something new can help you build confidence, enjoy the activity and stay safe with fewer setbacks.



Planning Your Activity

People with inherited bleeding disorders can and should be supported to be active. The right activity plan depends on the person, their goals, their body, their treatment, and the activity - not on blanket restrictions. Further information is available in the infographic below, and at <https://bleedingdisorderscanada.ca/edmat-physical-activity-and-sports/>

Planning Your Activity

Choosing the right activity is a shared process. It should include the person with the bleeding disorder, and, where relevant, their family, carers, physiotherapist, healthcare team, and coach or exercise professional.

1



Understand Yourself

When deciding what activities to do, it can help to consider:

- What is your current activity level?
- What are your strengths, limitations, areas you would like to improve, and goals?

2



Choose Activities That Suit You

- Match activities to your abilities and fitness level
- Choose activities you enjoy
- Consider what is practical and available to you

3



Plan Support and Reduce Risk

- Think about what you need to take part safely and confidently
- Plan ahead for treatment, equipment, supervision, or adaptations, if needed
- Discuss higher-risk, contact, collision, or more demanding activities with your bleeding disorder healthcare team

4



Make a Plan

- Start at a level that suits you
- Build up gradually
- Review and adjust as you go



Your physiotherapist, bleeding disorder healthcare team can support you at every stage

Recognising Bleeds and Injuries: What to Do

Modern treatments mean bleeds are less common for many people, but it is still important to recognise bleeds or injuries early. Acting early makes a big difference. Early recognition and following your personal treatment or bleeding management plan can help reduce recovery time and prevent longer-term problems.

Newer treatments also mean that bleeds may also feel more different than they did in the past.

What Might a Joint Bleed Feel Like?

The signs of a bleed can vary from person to person. Early signs may include:

- » Unusual stiffness or tightness
- » Reduced movement or a feeling of “heaviness”
- » Swelling, warmth, or increasing bruising
- » Pain or discomfort that increases with movement, weight-bearing, or use of the area
- » Difficulty using the joint normally

With some newer treatments, including non-factor therapies, the classic “tingling” feeling may be less noticeable or absent. Changes in how a joint or muscle feels, moves, or functions may be an early sign to pause, check the area and follow your treatment plan.

Muscle Bleeds

Watch for:

- » Tightness or a deep ache
- » Pain when using the muscle
- » Increasing swelling, bruising, or firmness
- » Reduced strength or difficulty moving normally

What To Do If You Suspect a Bleed or Significant Injury

- » Stop the activity and avoid further stress on the area while you check symptoms
- » Start early injury care (see page 22)
- » Follow your personal treatment or bleeding management plan

- » Contact your bleeding disorder or haemophilia treatment centre if you are unsure, symptoms are significant, or symptoms do not start to improve

Stop Activity & Check The Area If You Notice:

- » New, unusual, or worsening pain or discomfort
- » Swelling, warmth or bruising
- » Reduced movement
- » Difficulty using the limb or area normally

Be Prepared

- » Know your personal treatment or bleeding management plan
- » Keep any recommended treatment (i.e. “bleed dose”) available at school, work, sport, or when travelling, where this is part of your plan. Make sure key people, such as parents, carers, teachers, coaches, or exercise professionals, know what to do in an emergency, where appropriate
- » Being prepared helps you act early and stay confident when being active

Normal Soreness or a Bleed?

It is common to feel some muscle soreness after a new or increased activity. This is often called delayed-onset muscle soreness, or DOMS. It usually improves over time and settles with rest, gentle movement, or lighter activity. If you notice joint pain, swelling, warmth, reduced movement, increasing bruising, or pain that is unusual, worsening, severe, or does not settle, this should be treated more cautiously. Pause the activity. Follow your personal plan and seek advice from your physiotherapist, healthcare professional, or treatment centre.



Early Injury Care: P.O.L.I.C.E.

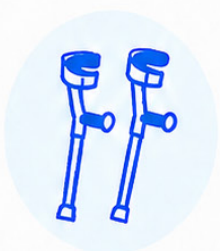
P.O.L.I.C.E. can help guide early injury care, alongside your personal bleeding management plan. The acronym P.O.L.I.C.E. stands for the following steps.

Early Injury Care: P.O.L.I.C.E.



Protect the Area

- After an injury or suspected bleed, unload the area and protect it from further trauma.
- This may mean reducing weight-bearing, using crutches, using a sling, or avoiding the movement that caused symptoms.
- The amount of rest or protection needed depends on the severity of the injury or bleed
- Complete rest should usually be avoided for longer than necessary, as this can lead to stiffness and weakness.



Optimal Loading

- Use relative rest by avoiding painful or aggravating loading.
- This can be as simple as not weightbearing on a limb (using crutches), or putting your arm in a sling.
- Optimal load may depend on the severity of the injury, and introducing load at the correct time is important for speedy recovery.
- Gradually reintroduce movement and load as symptoms improve, or with guidance
- Your physiotherapist may guide you. Symptoms, comfort, swelling, movement, and function can all help guide when and how to increase activity.



Ice

- May help with pain relief
- Wrap a cold pack in a damp cloth or tea towel and apply it to the injured area for 10–15 minutes
- Avoid applying ice directly to the skin.
- Do not leave on for longer than 20 minutes.
- It can be reapplied every 1–2 hours if required.



Compression

- Use compression only if advised, using tubigrip.
- Do not use tight compression that restricts circulation.
- Monitor the area closely.
- Remove or loosen compression and seek advice if there is increased pain, numbness, tingling, colour change, or swelling beyond the bandage.



Elevation

- Pain relief comes from decreasing pressure from swelling on the injured tissues.
- Areas further away from the body will need longer periods of time in a elevated position.
- Some throbbing or pressure may occur when lowering the limb after elevation. If pain, swelling, tightness, numbness, or colour change is increasing, seek advice.



P.O.L.I.C.E.

Early treatment shortens recovery time and reduces long-term impact.

When to Contact Your Treatment Centre

Contact your bleeding disorder or haemophilia treatment centre, physiotherapist, or healthcare professional if symptoms:

- » Are unusual, severe, or worrying
- » Get worse despite following your treatment plan
- » Do not start to improve as expected
- » Last longer than 24 hours
- » Affect walking, movement, sleep, school, work, or normal activities

Red Flags – Get Urgent Help



Most activity will not lead to serious problems, but the following symptoms need urgent attention. Seek medical care, and follow your emergency treatment plan if you have one, for:

- » Any head injury, especially if followed by headache, vomiting, drowsiness, confusion, dizziness, or feeling unwell
- » Neck, throat, chest, abdominal, groin, or hip pain
- » Numbness, weakness, pins and needles, or difficulty moving a limb
- » Severe or rapidly increasing pain, swelling, tightness, or bruising
- » Eye injury, major trauma, or any injury that feels unusual or severe



Returning to Activity After a Bleed or Injury

Returning to activity is part of recovery. The goal is not only to prevent another bleed or injury, but to rebuild movement, strength, confidence, and participation.

Returning to activity after a bleed, injury, or setback should be gradual. Taking the time to recover properly can help you rebuild strength, movement, confidence, and trust in your body, while reducing the risk of re-injury or further bleeding.

Recover strong - not just quickly

For more significant injuries, it is important to seek advice from your physiotherapist to guide your recovery. For minor symptoms or smaller injuries, some people may be able to manage with their usual treatment plan if they have experience and symptoms are improving, but it is still important to follow a structured approach and seek advice if unsure.

Phase 1: Settling Symptoms

Goal:

- » Reduce pain
- » Reduce swelling
- » Restore gentle movement

At this stage:

- » Follow your personal treatment or bleeding management plan
- » Follow early injury care principles such as P.O.L.I.C.E. where appropriate
- » Begin gentle movement when symptoms allow and it is safe to do so

Try to avoid complete rest for longer than needed, as this can lead to stiffness and weakness.

Phase 2: Restore Movement and Control

Goals:

- » Improve movement
- » Begin light muscle activity
- » Restore basic control

At this stage, you can start:

- » Gentle range of motion exercises
- » Light strengthening (e.g. isometric exercises)
- » Simple balance or control activities

This phase is important to prevent stiffness and muscle weakness.

Progress gradually so the area has time to adapt, and you can return with strength, confidence and lower risk of re-injury.

Phase 3: Build Strength, Control and Load Tolerance

Goals:

- » Rebuild strength and control
- » Increase tolerance to activity
- » Reintroduce normal movement patterns
- » Build confidence using the affected area

At this stage:

- » Gradually increase resistance and load
- » Begin activity specific movements
- » Build confidence in using the affected area

Gradual progression is key to improving joint resilience.

Phase 4: Return to Full Activity or Sport

Goal: Return to your normal level of activity

You should:

- » Start with lower intensity or shorter sessions
- » Increase gradually over time
- » Manage fatigue and increase load gradually so your body can adapt to the demands of the activity

For sport:

- » Begin with non contact or skill-based practice
- » Progress to full participation when movement, strength, control, fitness, confidence, and symptoms are appropriate for the activity
- » Make sure fitness and conditioning are appropriate for the demands of the sport or activity

Confidence and Recovery

After a bleed or setback:

- » It is normal to feel hesitant about returning to activity after a bleed or injury
- » Reduced confidence can affect how you move and may make it harder to return to activity

Gradually building back into activity, with the support of your physiotherapist or healthcare team, can help rebuild confidence and trust in your body, and support a successful return.

If needed, other members of your care team can support you with psychological aspects of recovery.

Key Message

Recovery is a gradual process.

Taking the time to rebuild strength, movement and confidence will support a safer and more successful return to activity.



Physical Activity – Take Home Messages

- ✓ Being active is important for your health and wellbeing. Physical activity, exercise and sport can improve strength, fitness, joint and muscle health, confidence, independence and quality of life
- ✓ There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The best activity is one that suits your body, interests, goals, treatment and lifestyle
- ✓ Every move counts. Physical activity does not need to be intense or involve sport. Small increases in movement throughout the day can make a meaningful difference
- ✓ Start where you are and build gradually. Progressing step by step is one of the safest and most effective ways to improve fitness, confidence and participation
- ✓ Know your body. Understanding your bleeding disorder, treatment plan, joint and muscle health and previous bleeding history can help you make informed choices about activity
- ✓ Recognise problems early. If you experience unusual pain, swelling, reduced movement, or symptoms suggestive of a bleed, stop, assess the situation, follow your treatment plan and seek advice when needed
- ✓ Use your support network. Your physiotherapist, treatment centre, healthcare team, family, teachers, coaches and exercise professionals can all help you take part safely and confidently
- ✓ Focus on participation, not limitations. With modern care, appropriate planning and the right support, many people with bleeding disorders can enjoy an active lifestyle throughout life

✓ **Any movement is better than none.** Start where you are, build gradually, and enjoy the benefits.



Being active can help you feel stronger, more confident, and more connected—every day.

DISCLAIMER This brochure was produced by Paula Loughnane and Mark McGowan, in partnership with and for the Irish Haemophilia Society. The advice and information were written objectively for the sole purpose of providing information regarding physical activity, exercise, and sport participation in people with bleeding disorders. It is for information only. We advise people with bleeding disorders to consult their haemophilia treatment centre before making significant changes to their physical activity or sport participation behaviours.



IRISH HAEMOPHILIA SOCIETY

**First Floor
Cathedral Court
New Street South
Dublin 8**

Tel: 01 6579900

**info@haemophilia.ie
www.haemophilia.ie**



**This booklet is sponsored by an
unrestricted educational grant from
Roche**