

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Employees with Bleeding Disorders

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A service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy

## Preface

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Authored Elisabeth Simpson, M.S. Updated 03/04/13.

# **JAN'S ACCOMMODATION AND COMPLIANCE SERIES**

## **Introduction**

JAN's Accommodation and Compliance Series is designed to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each publication in the series addresses a specific medical condition and provides information about the condition, ADA information, accommodation ideas, and resources for additional information.

The Accommodation and Compliance Series is a starting point in the accommodation process and may not address every situation. Accommodations should be made on a case by case basis, considering each employee's individual limitations and accommodation needs. Employers are encouraged to contact JAN to discuss specific situations in more detail.

For information on assistive technology and other accommodation ideas, visit JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <http://AskJAN.org/soar>.

## **Information about Bleeding Disorders**

### **What are bleeding disorders?**

Bleeding disorders are a group of conditions that result in poor blood clotting and extended bleeding time. People with bleeding disorders do not bleed more quickly than other people, just for a longer period of time.

### **How prevalent are bleeding disorders?**

Some bleeding disorders are present at birth and are caused by rare inherited disorders. Others develop during certain illnesses such as vitamin K deficiency and severe liver disease, or during treatments such as with the use of anticoagulant drugs or prolonged use of antibiotics (National Hemophilia Foundation, 2006a). Von Willebrand disease and hemophilia are the most common hereditary bleeding disorders. Von Willebrand disease affects at least 1% of the population (National Hemophilia Foundation, 2006c). About 1 out of every 10,000 people is born with hemophilia A, and around 1 out of 50,000 people is born with hemophilia B (World Federation of Hemophilia, 2011). It is estimated that 20,000 Americans have hemophilia (CDC, 2011a)

### **What are symptoms or complications of bleeding disorders?**

Generally, bleeding disorders make it difficult to stop bleeding when an injury occurs. With von Willebrand disease, excessive bleeding may occur after an invasive procedure or dental work (MedlinePlus, 2010). With hemophilia, internal bleeding into the joints is more common, especially into the knees, elbows, and ankles. This can cause stiffness

and decreased range of motion and strength in the extremities and may ultimately cause chronic joint deformities (World Federation of Hemophilia, 2011).

### **How are bleeding disorders treated?**

There are many plasma proteins called factors that are involved in the blood coagulation process, and if one or more are missing or deficient the blood clotting process is affected. Treatment may consist of replacing the missing factors by an injection or nasal spray of desmopressin acetate (DDAVP). Other individuals may need infusions of blood clotting factors before a scheduled surgery (National Hemophilia Foundation, 2006). In the past, cryoprecipitate was used to control serious bleeding and is still used in most developing countries. However, it is no longer used as the current standard of treatment in the US because there is no method to remove blood-borne viruses, such as HIV and hepatitis. (CDC, 2011b).

## **Bleeding Disorders and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

### **Is a bleeding disorder a disability under the ADA?**

The ADA does not contain a list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA has a general definition of disability that each person must meet (EEOC Regulations . . . , 2011). Therefore, some people with bleeding disorders will have a disability under the ADA and some will not.

A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment (EEOC Regulations . . . , 2011). For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, visit <http://AskJAN.org/corner/vol05iss04.htm>.

## **Accommodating Employees with Bleeding Disorders**

(Note: People with bleeding disorders may develop some of the limitations discussed below, but seldom develop all of them. Also, the degree of limitation will vary among individuals. Be aware that not all people with bleeding disorders will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations. The following is only a sample of the possibilities available. Numerous other accommodation solutions may exist.)

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What limitations is the employee with a bleeding disorder experiencing?
2. How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?
3. What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?
4. What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems? Are all possible resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
5. Has the employee with a bleeding disorder been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee with a bleeding disorder to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training regarding bleeding disorders?

### **Accommodation Ideas:**

#### Gross Motor Impairment:

- Modify the work-site to make it accessible
- Provide parking close to the work-site
- Install automatic door openers
- Provide an accessible restroom and break room
- Provide an accessible route of travel to other work areas used by the employee
- Adjust desk height if wheelchair or scooter is used
- Move workstation close to other work areas, break rooms and restrooms

#### Fine Motor Impairment:

- Implement ergonomic workstation design
- Provide alternative computer input devices and telephone access

### Fatigue/Weakness:

- Reduce or eliminate physical exertion and workplace stress
- Schedule periodic rest breaks away from the workstation
- Allow a flexible work schedule and flexible use of leave time
- Allow work from home
- Implement ergonomic workstation design
- Provide a scooter or other mobility aid if walking cannot be reduced

### Recurrent Need for Medical Intervention or Transfusions:

- Permit flexible scheduling
- Provide time off for medical appointments
- Allow periodic rest breaks
- Consider permitting work from home
- Allow additional unpaid leave if employee exhausts accrued time off

### Promote an Inclusive Workplace:

- Provide general disability awareness to coworkers while keeping the individual and his/her condition confidential
- Provide sensitivity training to coworkers and supervisors
- Offer peer counseling to the individual with the bleeding disorder, allow telephone calls to emotional supports, negotiate time for accommodations and time off for counseling or therapy
- Institute an “open-door policy” so employees with disabilities may approach their supervisors candidly

### **Plan of Action:**

Employers who have an individual with a bleeding disorder on staff may want to become educated about bleeding disorders and have a plan set up in the event that a bleed occurs. Employers and coworkers may want to be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of a bleed. These can include an employee complaining of tingling, bubbling, or stiffness in a joint, visible swelling in a body part, bruising, nose bleeds, or bleeding of the gums (World Federation of Hemophilia, 2011).

Employees with bleeding disorders may want to have a letter at their place of work written in advance to take to the emergency room with them describing their disorder and treatment. They should also let their employers know if they have an emergency supply of factor that needs to go to the emergency room with them. Employees with bleeding disorders may wear a medical alert necklace or bracelet. If basic first aid is needed for small surface cuts, caregivers should maintain Universal Precautions at all times, including the use of latex gloves. Additional first aid treatment information should be obtained from qualified healthcare providers.

### **Situations and Solutions:**

A mental health employee with hemophilia was restricted by her physician from repetitive bending and twisting at the waist. JAN suggested the employee use a reacher to pick up lighter objects to prevent bending.

A forklift driver had difficulty grasping the steering wheel. The forklift was fitted with a spinner ball to eliminate the need for grasping.

An office worker with a bleeding disorder was limited in the amount of time she could work at a keyboard. JAN suggested using speech recognition software to decrease keyboarding time and suggested implementing an ergonomic workstation.

An insurance clerk was experiencing pain in her back, neck, and hands from sitting for long periods of time doing computer work. She was accommodated with speech recognition software, an ergonomic chair, and an adjustable sit/stand workstation.

### **Products:**

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <http://AskJAN.org/soar> is designed to let users explore various accommodation options. Many product vendor lists are accessible through this system; however, upon request JAN provides these lists and many more that are not available on the Web site. Contact JAN directly if you have specific accommodation situations, are looking for products, need vendor information, or are seeking a referral.

## Resources

### **Job Accommodation Network**

West Virginia University  
PO Box 6080  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080  
Toll Free: (800)526-7234  
TTY: (877)781-9403  
Fax: (304)293-5407  
jan@AskJAN.org  
<http://AskJAN.org>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities.

### **Office of Disability Employment Policy**

200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room S-1303  
Washington, DC 20210  
Toll Free: (866)633-7365  
TTY: (877)889-5627  
Fax: (202)693-7888  
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/>

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. ODEP provides national leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities while striving to eliminate barriers to employment.

### **National Hemophilia Foundation**

116 W. 32nd Street, 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Toll Free: (800)424-2634  
Direct: (212)328-3700  
Fax: (212)328-3777  
handi@hemophilia.org  
<http://www.hemophilia.org>

The National Hemophilia Foundation is dedicated to finding better treatments and cures for bleeding and clotting disorders and to preventing the complications of these disorders through education, advocacy, and research.

### **World Federation of Hemophilia**

1425, boul. René-Lévesque ouest  
Bureau 1010  
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1T7 , PQ

Direct: (514)875-7944  
Fax: (514)875-8916  
wfh@wfh.org  
<http://www.wfh.org>

The World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with hemophilia and related bleeding disorders.

**thereforyou.com**  
formerly Hemophilia Galaxy  
One Baxter Parkway  
Deerfield, IL 60015  
Toll Free: (800)423-2090  
<http://www.thereforyou.com/>

Thereforyou.com, formerly known as Hemophilia Galaxy, provides information for patients and caregivers about hemophilia including how to manage treatment plans, plus provides hemophilia resources, news, and events.

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