

Paediatric Haemophilia Service

Haemophilia and Sports for Paediatric Patients

This leaflet explains why sports and activity are very important when you have haemophilia. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Why are sports so important?

Twenty years ago, people with haemophilia would have been discouraged from participating in any kind of sporting activity because of the fear of bleeding. However, we have evolved and individuals with severe haemophilia are on prophylaxis from an early age, and those with mild and moderate forms of the disease are more aware of what to look out for and how to treat themselves. Spontaneous bleeds should not happen, and an active lifestyle is encouraged.

We all know that exercise is good for us and it is recommended that young people aged 5 to 18 participate in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. It keeps us fit and healthy, but it is particularly important for people with haemophilia.

Benefits of exercise include:

- Strong muscles protect joints from pressure and trauma – and look after joints long term.
- Joint flexibility.
- Improved balance, coordination and body awareness, reducing the incidence of injury.
- Reducing the risk of being overweight.
- Reducing stress and anxiety and improving wellbeing.
- If your joints are in good condition, they will recover quicker from a bleed.

Which sports can I take part in?

Most sports are safe for people with haemophilia however some sports may increase risk of bleeding more than others. Each person presenting with haemophilia is unique and the choice of the most suitable sports and exercise program needs to be made collaboratively between patient, doctor and physiotherapist. The table below describes some of the sports you may want to consider. This is only a guide.

- **Activities that generally have only very few risks of bleeding.** Activity recommended for all people with haemophilia even if not on treatment.
- **Low risk of bleeding for a patient with mild or moderate haemophilia or for severe haemophilia on prophylactic treatment.**
- **Activity with a moderate to high risk of bleeding if not on treatment or if joint weakness is already present.** In discussion with the treatment team, this activity may be performed by a person with mild or moderate haemophilia, or a person with severe haemophilia on prophylaxis as long as joint condition is monitored.
- **Physical activities with a high risk of bleeding.** Strongly discouraged for all people with haemophilia even if on factor treatment.

SPORT	LEISURE	CLUB	COMPETITION	RECOMMENDED PROTECTION
Archery	●	●	●	Forearm guards
ATV / mountain biking	●	●	●	Helmet, elbow guards
Badminton	●	●	●	Indoor shoes
Baseball	●	●	●	Batting helmet
Basketball	●	●	●	Basketball shoes covering the ankles
Beach volleyball	●	●	●	
BMX	●	●	●	Helmet, elbow guards, wrist guards, knee guards
Bowling	●	●	●	
Contact martial arts and sports (karate, boxing, wrestling, etc.)	●	●	●	Mandatory protection depending on the sport
Cross-country skiing	●	●	●	Proper length skis and poles
Deep-sea diving	●	●	●	Never alone
Diving	●	●	●	
Downhill skiing	●	●	●	Helmet, proper length skis and poles
Fencing	●	●	●	Helmet, gloves
Field hockey	●	●	●	Shin guards

Fitness, strength training	●	●	●	Training by an experienced trainer
Football	●	●	●	Shin guards
Go-carting	●	●	●	Helmet, high-top shoes
Golf	●	●	●	Golf shoes
Handball	●	●	●	Indoor shoes
Horseback riding	●	●	●	Helmet
Indoor climbing	●	●	●	Climbing shoes
Judo	●	●	●	Club only
Motocross	●	●	●	Helmet, boots, protective clothing
Mountain climbing	●	●	●	Good hiking shoes, helmet
Non-contact martial arts (kata, capoeira, tai chi, etc.)	●	●	●	Mandatory protection depending on the sport
Orienteering	●	●	●	Regularly replaced jogging shoes
Parachuting, paragliding, microlighting	●	●	●	Helmet
Road cycling	●	●	●	Helmet, on an appropriate road or bicycle path
Roller skating, rollerblading, ice skating, skateboarding	●	●	●	Helmet, elbow guards, wrist guards, knee guards
Rowing, kayaking, canoeing	●	●	●	Life jacket
Rugby, American football	●	●	●	
Sailing	●	●	●	Life jacket, helmet, never alone
Snowboarding	●	●	●	Helmet, elbow guards, wrist guards, knee guards
Squash	●	●	●	Indoor shoes
Surfing, bodyboarding	●	●	●	Never alone
Swimming	●	●	●	
Table tennis	●	●	●	Indoor shoes
Tennis	●	●	●	Tennis shoes
Track: jumping and sprinting	●	●	●	Running shoes
Track: long-distance running, jogging	●	●	●	Regularly replaced jogging shoes, no flat soles
Track: shot put, javelin, hammer throwing, etc.	●	●	●	Outdoor shoes
Trampoline	●	●	●	Club only
Ultimate frisbee	●	●	●	
Volleyball	●	●	●	Kneepads, indoor shoes
Walking, hiking	●	●	●	Good hiking shoes
Waterskiing	●	●	●	Life jacket
Waterpolo	●	●	●	Cap with ear guards
Weightlifting	●	●	●	
Windsurfing	●	●	●	Life jacket, helmet

What precautions should I take before playing sports?

- If you are on prophylaxis and play a particular sport on a certain day, it is best to arrange prophylaxis treatment on that day to provide maximum cover.
- Always warm up and cool down before and after playing sport and do proper stretches. This has nothing to do with haemophilia, it applies to anyone playing sport and limits the number of injuries you get and to have better flexibility and mobility.
- It is very important that you wear suitable protective equipment. Again, this applies to anyone playing sport, not just those with haemophilia, but is more important for you as a direct blow to the head or a joint could give you a nasty bleed.
- Always wear a helmet when cycling.
- Wear a helmet plus knee and elbow pads for skateboarding.
- Wear a hat and ankle boots when horse-riding.
- Use shin guards for football and cricket.

Remember that each person is different. It may be that you play football without any problems and, if so, that is great. However, you might have already had an injury and have some joint damage or muscle weakness. This may influence your choice in sports but should not prevent you from finding one that suits you.

If you are in any doubt about taking part in a particular sport, contact the specialist nurse or physiotherapist.

Remember, sports are good for you, so go out and enjoy taking part.

Contact us

You can contact physiotherapy by contacting the Haemophilia team on their direct number 020 8725 0763 or via the clinical specialist nurse on 0777 1594704 / 0739 3249628 and bleep 5003 who will then contact the physiotherapist during working hours.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: PAE_HAS_01 **Published:** October 2024 **Review date:** October 2026