

Hand Arm Vibration (HAV)

Exposure to vibration can have serious health effects. Vibration from hand held tools can cause Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS), which affects many workers in the construction industry. Whole-Body Vibration (WBV) also occurs in construction industry and may, for example, affects drivers of construction vehicles, often resulting in back injury.

Hand-arm vibration comes from the use of hand-held power tools and is the cause of significant ill health (painful and disabling disorders of the blood vessels, nerves and joints).



The information on this page is aimed mainly at workers

Maximum Usage Time		
Vibration in m/s ²	Maximum daily usage time in hours	
below 5	 8 hours maximum daily use	8 hours
5 to 10	 2 hours max daily use without further assessment	2 hours
over 10	 Consult your supervisor	assess risk
*Refer to HAE label and leaflet		

➤ You could be risking damage to nerves, blood vessels and joints of the hand, wrist and arm if you work regularly with hand-held or hand-guided power tools for more than a few hours each day.

➤ Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) caused by exposure to vibration at work is preventable, but once the damage is done it is permanent.

➤ The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 were introduced to better protect workers from vibration at work and came into force in July 2005.

Am I at risk?

You are at risk if you regularly use hand-held or hand guided power tools and machines such as:

- Concrete breakers, concrete pokers;
- Sanders, grinders, disc cutters;
- Hammer drills;
- Chipping hammers;
- Chainsaws, brush cutters, hedge trimmers,
- Powered mowers;
- Scabblers or needle guns.

You are also at risk if you hold workpieces, which vibrate while being processed by powered machinery such as pedestal grinders.

You are particularly at risk if you regularly operate:

- Hammer action tools for more than about 15 minutes per day; or
- Some rotary and other action tools for more than about one hour per day.

As you are likely to be above the exposure action value set out in the regulations.

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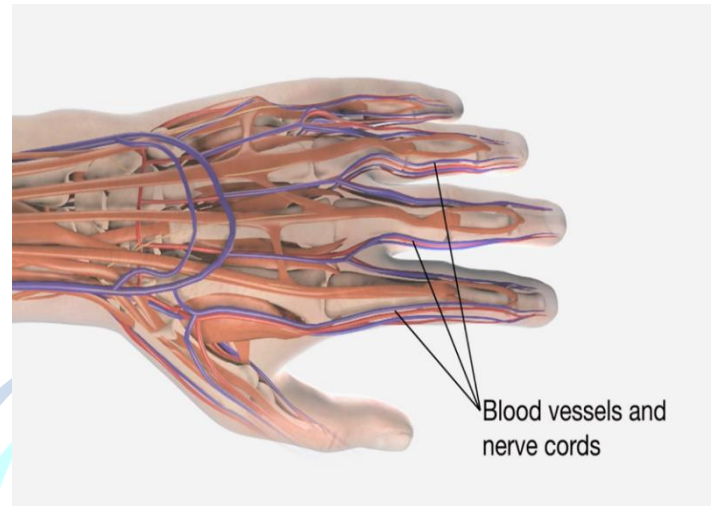
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What are the early signs and symptoms to look out for?

- Tingling and numbness in the fingers (which can cause sleep disturbance).
- Not being able to feel things with your fingers.
- Loss of strength in your hands (you may be less able to pick up or hold heavy objects).
- In the cold and wet, the tips of your fingers going white then red and being painful on recovery (vibration white finger).



If you continue to use high-vibration tools these symptoms will probably get worse, for example:

- The numbness in your hands could become permanent and you won't be able to feel things at all;
- You will have difficulty picking up small objects such as screws or nails;
- The vibration white finger could happen more frequently and affect more of your fingers

By law, as an employer, you must assess and identify measures to eliminate or reduce risks from exposure to hand-arm vibration so that you can protect your employees from risks to their health.

Where the risks are low, the actions you take may be simple and inexpensive, but where the risks are high, you should manage them using a prioritised action plan to control exposure to hand-arm vibration.



Where required, ensure that:

- Control measures to reduce vibration are properly applied; and

- You provide information, training and health surveillance.

Review what you are doing if anything changes that may affect exposures to vibration where you work.

Check out our Toolbox Talk

[HAV Toolbox Talk & Record Sheet](#)

[HAV ready Reckoner](#)

To find out more about signs and symptoms of HAVS please check the HSE website

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/yourhands.htm>

Find out more on advice for employers check the HSE website

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/advicetoemployers/index.htm>



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