



**WORKERS HEALTH CENTRE**

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**Health And Safety**

**Fact Sheet**

# HAND ARM VIBRATIONS SYNDROME (HAVS)

## What is Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)?

HAVS is a group of diseases caused by exposure of the hands to vibration. The best known of these is "vibration white finger" (VWF) which is caused by the effects of the vibration on the body's blood circulation.

Other damage may be caused to the nerves and muscles of the fingers and hands causing numbness and tingling, reduced grip strength and sensitivity. 'Carpel tunnel syndrome' is an example of this and is caused by compression of the nerves in the wrist. Pain and stiffness in the hands, and joints of the wrists, elbows and shoulders are other possible symptoms.

HAVS is particularly debilitating in that once a worker develops the initial stages of the disease, its development accelerates if exposure to vibration continues.

## Who should be concerned about HAV exposure?

Any jobs or tasks that require the regular and frequent use of vibrating tools and equipment may result in significant hand arm vibration exposure. High risk work would therefore include:

- Road maintenance & repair
- Construction
- Maintenance of grounds & parks
- Foundries
- Heavy engineering
- Manufacturing concrete products
- Mines and quarries
- Motor vehicle manufacture and repair
- Public utilities and
- Metal fabrication

Examples of the types of power tools that may cause high vibration exposure are; hand held grinders, concrete cutters, power hammers, sanders, hammer drills, chainsaws, and brush cutters.



## What are the symptoms for HAVS?

- Numbness and tingling in the fingers
- Not being able to feel things properly
- Fingers going white (blanching) and becoming red and painful on recovery (particularly in the cold and wet)
- Joint pain and stiffness in the hand and arm and reduced grip strength.

In accordance with the Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations all employers have a duty of care to provide a working environment that is safe and without risk to health.

If you are experiencing any symptoms report the matter to your employer and consult your GP.

The health risks associated with exposure to HAV are well known. If your employees are at risk to HAV, you have a duty of care to manage and control these risks.



For further information and advice contact the Workers Health Centre



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