

Occupational Health Service

Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

HAVS symptoms

If you have HAVS, then you may experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- Numbness and tingling in the fingers
- Loss of sense of touch
- Reduced temperature
- Loss of strength in your hands
- Attacks of reduced blood circulation and parts of the fingers become white, then red and painful as the blood returns (this is known as vibration white finger). This occurs mainly when you are exposed to cold or wet
- Joint pains and stiffness in hand and arm



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

A disorder of the hand and arm which has a number of causes but can be associated with exposure to vibration. It may include the following symptoms: tingling, numbness, pains and weakness.

Occupational Health will advise you of any concerns with your health and with your consent advise your GP.

- **Fitness for work**

Occupational Health will advise your line manager in writing that you are fit to work with hand-held vibrating tools or if any adjustments to your work are required. No medical information will be passed to your department without your written consent and this is only requested when deemed necessary for your health and safety.

Reports will be made to your line manager with your consent, if changes in the work process are required to prevent or reduce skin problems. Anonymous statistical evidence from the programme should be used to guide managers on further improvement of control measures if problems are identified.

- **On cessation of exposure to vibration**, health surveillance should continue for 1 year after the date of cessation. Legislation requires that health surveillance health records are confidentially stored for 40 years after cessation of exposure or when an employee leaves the University of Strathclyde.

Information Sessions/Tool box talks

When a department identifies through risk assessment and occupational hygiene monitoring, which can be arranged by Safety Services, that there is a risk of exposure for employees to hand arm vibration and advises Occupational Health Service of the need for HAVS health surveillance, information sessions will be provided by Occupational Health to the identified employees. In collaboration with the department, Occupational Health will provide information on risks of exposure to hand-arm vibration, signs and symptoms of HAVS and the health surveillance programme. Information sessions should take place prior to baseline health surveillance taking place.

Key messages

- HAVS is preventable, but once the damage is done it is permanent.
- HAVS is serious and disabling.
- Damage from HAVS can include the inability to do fine work and cold can trigger painful finger blanching attacks.
- Health surveillance is vital to detect and respond to early signs of damage.