

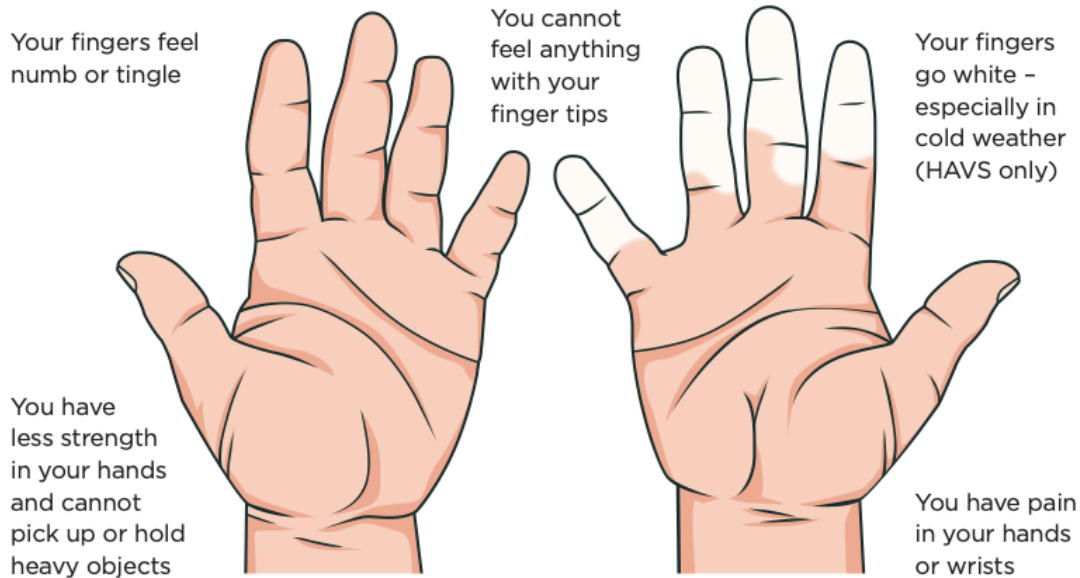


Toolbox Talk

Hand Arm Vibration

Vibration from tools and machines can be transmitted into your hands and arms (called hand-arm vibration – HAV).

You can develop hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) or carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) if you regularly and frequently use hand-held power tools and machines, especially for long periods of time.



What are symptoms of HAVS and CTS?

The symptoms can come and go, but with continued exposure to HAV, symptoms can become prolonged or permanent. This could happen after only a few months of exposure, but in most cases, it will take a few years.

As a result, you could experience pain, distress and disturbed sleep.

What can increase the chances of you developing HAVS or CTS?

Medical conditions such as diabetes and arthritis, and injuries such as frostbite can increase the chances of developing HAVS or CTS. As can carrying out DIY or hobbies at home.

HAV could also make any existing hand injuries or illnesses you have worse.

What can happen if you ignore the symptoms?

If you ignore the symptoms, the damage can become permanent and disabling. As a result, you may have to stop working with vibrating equipment, or may not be able to do simple tasks like opening jars, or using a phone. It is important to seek medical advice if you have symptoms of HAVS or CTS.



Toolbox Talk

What precautions can you take?

- Use the power tool/machine properly. Before you first use the power tool/machine ask for training on how to safely use it or read the manufacturer's instructions. Avoid gripping power tools and machines more than you have to.
- Before you use it, check the power tool/machine is working properly and has been well-maintained.
- Check the power tool/machine is in good working condition before you start using it. Using damaged or blunt equipment can be harmful, even if you are not using it for long.
- Tell your manager if you have any concerns or notice any faults with the power tool/machine.
- Limit the amount of time you use power tools and machines.
- Avoid using power tools and machines for long periods of time without breaks.
- If you work with a team of people trained to use the power tool/machine, it is a great idea to rotate the noisy, heavy and high-vibration jobs around the team. That way the exposure of each person is reduced.
- Keep your hands warm and dry in cold weather.
- Wear gloves that are not too thick and have good slip-resistance so you can get a good grip on the power tool/machine.
- Keep your fingers moving when you are on breaks to help blood move around your fingers and hands. Stop smoking.
- You are more likely to develop HAVS if you smoke tobacco because nicotine reduces the movement of blood to your hands and fingers.



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