Toolbox talk

Hand-arm vibration

Look after your hands before the damage is done

10 minutes

For: Anyone using breakers, grinders, drills, saws, compactors or similar tools

Why it matters

Regular use of vibrating tools can cause hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) and carpal tunnel syndrome. The damage to nerves, blood vessels and joints is permanent and can stop you working.

Key points

1. Early signs are tingling, pins and needles or numbness in the fingers, often after using tools.
2. Later signs include white fingers in the cold, loss of grip and pain. This damage can't be reversed.
3. The daily exposure action value is 2.5 m/s² A(8), which is 100 exposure points.
4. The daily exposure limit is 5 m/s² A(8), which is 400 points. It must never be exceeded.
5. Exposure depends on how much the tool vibrates and how long you use it, so trigger time matters.
6. Low-vibration tools, sharp bits and well-maintained kit all cut your exposure.
7. Keep warm and dry. Cold makes symptoms worse and reduces blood flow to your fingers.
8. Report symptoms early and go to health surveillance if you're offered it.

Sources: HSE: Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005; HSE: Exposure points system and ready-reckoner; HSE: Hand-arm vibration, advice for employees (INDG296).

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/hand-arm-vibration**

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Do

- Use the lowest-vibration tool that will do the job.
- Keep tools maintained, with sharp blades and bits.
- Let the tool do the work. Grip only as tightly as you need to.
- Take regular breaks and rotate jobs to spread exposure.
- Wear gloves to keep your hands warm and dry.

Don't

- Don't ignore tingling or numbness. Tell someone.
- Don't use blunt or worn tools. They vibrate more and take longer.
- Don't rely on anti-vibration gloves to protect you.
- Don't smoke if you can avoid it, as it reduces blood flow to your hands.

Ask the group

- Which tools on this site do you use the most?
- Has anyone had tingling or white fingers after work?
- How do we record trigger time on this job?
- Is there a lower-vibration way to do any of our tasks?

If it goes wrong: If you have tingling, numbness, white fingers or a weaker grip, tell your supervisor and ask for a health check with occupational health or your GP. The earlier it's caught, the more can be done to stop it getting worse.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____

Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Go further: Construction site PPE guide

Sources: HSE: Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005; HSE: Exposure points system and ready-reckoner; HSE: Hand-arm vibration, advice for employees (INDG296).

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Attendance register

Hand-arm vibration

Site / project _____ Date and time _____

Presented by _____ Company _____

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
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13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature _____ Follow-up actions _____

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Quick check

Hand-arm vibration

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. What is often the first sign of hand-arm vibration damage?

- [ ] Tingling or numbness in the fingers
- [ ] Back pain
- [ ] Headaches

2. How many exposure points equal the daily exposure limit?

- [ ] 100
- [ ] 250
- [ ] 400

3. Do anti-vibration gloves protect you from HAVS?

- [ ] Yes, completely
- [ ] No, don't rely on them for protection
- [ ] Only in winter

4. Why do blunt tools increase your exposure?

- [ ] They vibrate more and take longer
- [ ] They don't
- [ ] They're heavier

5. Why should you keep your hands warm?

- [ ] Comfort only
- [ ] Cold reduces blood flow and makes symptoms worse
- [ ] It doesn't matter

Sources: HSE: Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005; HSE: Exposure points system and ready-reckoner; HSE: Hand-arm vibration, advice for employees (INDG296).

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Tingling or numbness in the fingers

Tingling, pins and needles and numbness are early warning signs. Report them straight away.

2. 400

HSE's points system: the action value is 100 points and the limit value is 400 points.

3. No, don't rely on them for protection

Gloves keep hands warm, which helps, but they don't reliably reduce vibration.

4. They vibrate more and take longer

Worn tools vibrate more and you use them for longer, so your dose goes up.

5. Cold reduces blood flow and makes symptoms worse

Cold triggers attacks of white finger and reduces blood flow to damaged fingers.

Sources

- HSE: Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/regulations.htm
- HSE: Exposure points system and ready-reckoner
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l140.pdf
- HSE: Hand-arm vibration, advice for employees (INDG296)
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg296.htm

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

Tingling fingers? Tell someone today.

1. **Use low-vibration, well-kept tools**
2. **Keep hands warm and dry**
3. **Watch your trigger time**

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Sources and qualifications

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Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: Vibration Regulations

2.5 m/s² A(8) action and 5 m/s² A(8) limit values, exposure assessment and control duties.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/regulations.htm

S2. HSE: Exposure points ready reckoner

100/400 points, vibration magnitude and trigger time; key points 3-5 and quiz 2.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l140.pdf

S3. HSE INDG296: Advice for employees

HAVS symptoms, permanent harm, suitable tools, maintenance, grip, warmth, breaks and reporting; Do/Don't and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg296.htm