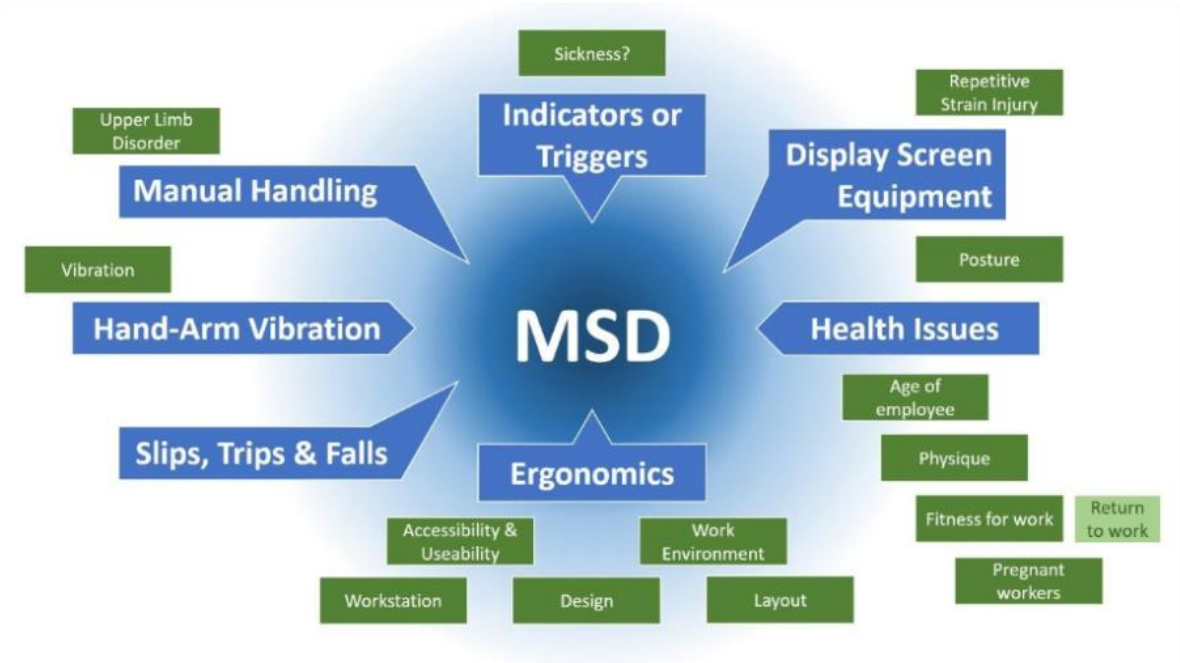
CDOIF: Managing Hand Arm Vibration Risks: A guide to recognising and managing Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) risks, associated with MSD's within the workplace.



Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) is a serious and preventable condition caused by regular use of hand-held vibrating tools. In the chemical industry, tasks such as maintenance work, pipefitting, cleaning using high-pressure equipment, and use of powered tools for fabrication or repair pose specific risks.

This guidance sets out key legal duties and provides line managers with practical steps for managing the risks sensitively and effectively.

Why is this important?

HAVS symptoms can significantly impact the daily lives of affected individuals and their ability to safely carry out their work.

In a high hazard and often physically demanding sector such as the chemical industry, managing the vibrating and percussive tool risks is essential for:

- Promoting employee health and wellbeing
- Ensuring health and safety standards are upheld
- Ensuring legal duty of care is met under the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 by:
  - Assessing the risk from exposure to vibration
  - Eliminating or reducing exposure where reasonably practicable
  - Providing health surveillance when there is a risk
  - Training and informing workers on HAVS risks and controls
  - Maintaining suitable records
  - Reporting any diagnosed case of HAVS linked to occupational exposure to vibration via the HSE RIDDOR portal: www.hse.gov.uk/riddor.

How do I know if a worker is impacted?

Typical symptoms which, if reported by the individual or identified at health surveillance appointments, could suggest that an individual may be experiencing HAVS symptoms include:

- Numbness or tingling in fingers
- Loss of grip strength [more pronounced in cold weather]
- White finger (blanching) in cold weather
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Reduced fine motor control

What should I be doing?

Identify The Risks

Typical tasks with increased risk of vibration exposure include:

- Use of grinders, saws, or percussive tools
- Use of high-pressure jetting equipment
- Use of impact or rotary tools
- Use of powered cutting tools.

A suitable and sufficient risk assessment should:

- List all vibrating and percussive tools used on site
- Identify how long and how often individual workers use them
- Include a calculation of exposure levels and required actions. You can use HSE's HAVS calculator to calculate exposure levels and required actions www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/vibrationcalc.htm
- Where actual vibration monitoring results are not available use the manufacturers guidance to calculate vibration exposure levels.

Implement Control Measures

- *Eliminate:* Automate or redesign tasks to remove the need for vibration exposure.

- *Substitute:* Use low-vibration or non-powered alternatives where possible.

- *Engineering Controls:* Regularly inspect and maintain tools to reduce unnecessary vibration, fit vibration-damping handles or mounts.

- *Administrative Controls:*

    - Rotate staff to limit individual exposure
    - set trigger times and task duration limits
    - implement permits to work for high-vibration tasks
    - Tag all vibrating tools with colour-coded exposure action value information (e.g red for high risk) as a visual indicator to the user

    - Carry out annual vibration monitoring via a competent person.

- *PPE:* Ensure that you review at regular intervals the PPE required for the task. For example, the use of gloves for grip or protection.

Carry Out Health Surveillance

You should carry out health surveillance. This should be undertaken by a competent occupational health provider following the HSE's four-tier system:

1. Tier 1: Baseline health questionnaire
2. Tier 2: Annual screening
3. Tier 3: Occupational health clinical assessment if symptoms are reported
4. Tier 4: Specialist diagnosis by a medical professional / Occupational Health Physician if required.

A diagnosis of HAVS must be reported under RIDDOR as a reportable disease if:

- The employee has been exposed to vibration at work, and
- The condition is confirmed by a medical professional / Occupational Health Physician.

Reports should be made via the HSE's RIDDOR reporting portal: www.hse.gov.uk/riddor. Employers must keep records of health surveillance for 40 years.

Carry Out Training & Communicate the Risks

It is essential that workers understand:

- What HAVS is and how to recognise early symptoms
- Which tools and tasks carry risk, including the impact of task duration
- How to report concerns or symptoms
- How to use tools safely and limit vibration exposure – results of vibration monitoring and tool tags should be explained.

A mix of toolbox talks, signage, team training sessions, and one-to-one discussions based on the typical tools and tasks in the workplace are effective means of ensuring worker understanding.

How can I do it?

Early identification of risks, prevention and provision of support are critical in preventing HAVS. Line managers should:

- Know which workers use vibrating tools and for how long
- Monitor compliance with tool usage guidelines
- Promptly refer workers who report symptoms, to an occupational health provider
- Encourage open dialogue
- Maintain confidentiality and coordinate with HR and the occupational health provider, to ensure health surveillance appointments are attended, and that health records are updated and maintained.

When a worker shows symptoms of HAVS or is diagnosed, reasonable adjustments may include:

- Reassigning them to low- or no-vibration tasks
- Adjusting shift patterns or task durations
- Providing alternative tools where practical
- Modifying work processes or environments
- Ensuring appropriate support through occupational health is provided whilst going through this change in circumstances.

What are Key Indicators of Good Practice?

- Workplace risk assessments consider HAVS risks, including tools used, task duration and individuals exposed
- Workers feel safe to raise concerns and request adjustments
- A programme of health surveillance is in place and OH referrals are accessible and confidential.

Further Information:

- HSE HAVS Guidance: www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav
- HAV Exposure Calculator: www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/vibrationcalc.htm
- Health Surveillance Requirements: Hand arm vibration - Health surveillance
- RIDDOR Reporting: www.hse.gov.uk/riddor
- HSE web page on OH professionals [Competency] - Occupational health - Overview
- HSE web page on HAV - Hand arm vibration - Health surveillance
- HSE web page on general health surveillance - Health surveillance - HSE