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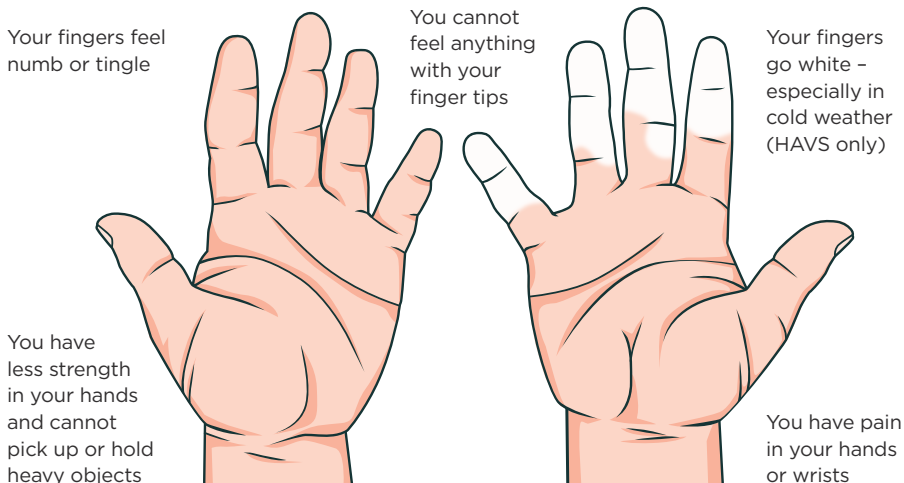
## Hand-arm vibration - information for workers

Guidance for workers who work with hand-held power tools and machines.

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?



**FIGURE 1:**  
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.

## What can you do?

Your business must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by its work.

Your business must manage work risks to your health and safety. If you are at risk from HAV, control measures should be in place to eliminate or minimise your exposure to HAV. As described below, there are things that you can do to help.

Your business must engage with you and your representatives when identifying and assessing risks from HAV, and when making decisions about the ways to eliminate or minimise those risks and monitoring procedures.

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### Use the right power tool/machine for the job.

#### Know your power tool/machine.

Find out what the vibration emission levels of the power tool/machine are, and what you can do to reduce your exposure to HAV.

#### 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.

#### Learn to spot the symptoms of HAVS and CTS. If you start experiencing symptoms, let your manager know as soon as you can and seek medical advice.

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**Take part in health monitoring programmes.**

Your business may set up a health monitoring programme.

Health monitoring looks at whether your health is being harmed because of your exposure to HAV. It involves checking for nerve, muscle or circulation damage in your hands, wrists and arms.

Your business should pay for all monitoring costs.

Your business must engage with you when making decisions about monitoring procedures.

Your business must discuss the proposed monitoring with you (such as what is involved, when it will take place and how often).

The monitoring should be carried out by a health professional with sufficient knowledge, skills, training and experience.

You must give informed consent for the health monitoring: [hdc.org.nz](http://hdc.org.nz)

Your business must keep any personal information collected during monitoring secure and confidential, and use it for the purposes it has been collected for: [www.privacy.org.nz](http://www.privacy.org.nz)

For more information, see our guidance: [What to know about exposure monitoring and health monitoring – for workers](#)

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**Get involved when the business replaces the power tool/machine or looks at how you work.**

With your business, see if you can change how you work so you do not need to use vibrating power tools or machines.

If you still need to use power tools and machines, ask for low-vibration versions.

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For more information about how your business could manage health risks, see: [Hand-arm vibration – information for businesses](#)

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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