

Hand Arm Vibration (HAVS) Assessments

Hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) causes symptoms in fingers, hands and arms caused by repeated and frequent use of hand-held vibrating tools. For example, power drills, chainsaws, pneumatic drills, etc.

It may also be caused by holding or working with machinery that vibrates. It is not clear how vibration causes the condition. It is probably due to slight but repeated injury to the small nerves and blood vessels in the fingers. Over time these may gradually lose some of their function and cause symptoms. Possibly, up to 1 in 10 people who work regularly with vibrating tools may develop HAVS.

Under The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 an employer has a duty to assess vibration risks to health and safety.

The employer must eliminate vibration risk at source, or reduce to the lowest reasonable practicable level and to provide information and training for employees on vibration risks and control measures. If the exposure action value (EAV) is likely to be exceeded, *Daily exposure of 2.5 m/s² A(8)*, health surveillance is required.

This will identify employees with symptoms that require further investigation.

- **Tier 1** is a health questionnaire completed as part of Initial or Baseline Screening.

The replies to the questionnaire will indicate whether they need to be referred to Tier 3 for a HAVS health assessment with our Specialist Occupational Health Nurse.

- **Tier 2** is a health questionnaire to be completed as part of an annual screening programme for employees exposed to vibration risks to check whether they need to be referred to Tier 3 for a HAVS health assessment with our Specialist Occupational Health Nurse.
- **Tier 3** If an employee declares vibration-related symptoms a Tier 3 assessment will be carried out by a HAVS Specialist Occupational Health Nurse.

This includes taking a detailed history and physical tests that assess the vascular and the nervous system of the hands.

The outcome of this assessment will help the nurse decide whether there is reason to believe that the symptoms could be due to HAVS. If so, the nurse will escalate this to a Tier 4 assessment and physical examination may recommend interim adjustment of exposure to vibration

- **Tier 4** involves a referral to an Occupational Health Physician with specialist training for a formal diagnosis.

The assessment consists of a detailed history, assessment of symptoms and signs of HAVS. Tests include sensation, assessing the vascular system in the hands and look at grip strength.

The doctor will advise you on the employee's fitness for work, advise on further surveillance and recommend limits to exposure.

Cost of Assessments

Assessment Tiers	Cost
Tier 1 - Baseline HAVS Questionnaire	£25.00
Tier 2 - Annual Review HAVS Questionnaire	£25.00
Tier 3 - Assessment with Occupational Health HAVS Nurse Specialist – 45 minutes	£60.00
Tier 4 - Assessment with Occupational Health Physician – 1-hour	£325.00