University of Huddersfield Occupational Health Department

Hand Arm Vibration (HAVS) surveillance information leaflet

The University’s Occupational Health Department provides health surveillance for University staff who are exposed to hazards whilst at work. For example vibration from the use of handheld power tools. The University has a duty of care to check that hazards are not affecting your health and that the safeguards in place are working correctly to protect your health and safety.

**What is the purpose of Hand Arm Vibration Surveillance**

* The Hand arm vibration surveillance is for employees who have been identified through risk assessments in their work area as being at possible risk of developing Hand arm vibration syndrome.
* Early detection and Intervention can limit the effects and improve the prognosis but the effects are irreversible.
* An educational and motivational tool.
* The initial appointment at the start of employment is used as a baseline and the annual appointment is used to determine if there are any problems.
* It is used to measure the effectiveness of Personal Protective Equipment.

**What to expect from HAVS health surveillance**

* Your HAVS appointment will last approximately 30 minutes.
* You will be seen by one of the occupational health nurses and they will go through a series of questions with you.
* If further follow up is required you may be allocated an appointment to see an occupational health physician.
* You will receive your HAVS results and re call date.
* You will also receive a copy of the HAVS results certificate advising if any further action is required.
* A copy of this certificate will also be sent to your manager.

**What are the early signs and symptoms to look out for?**

* Tingling and numbness in the fingers (which can cause sleep disturbance).
* Not being able to feel things with your fingers.
* Loss of strength in your hands (you may be less able to pick up or hold heavy objects).
* In the cold and wet, the tips of your fingers going white then red and being painful on recovery (vibration white finger).

If you continue to use high-vibration tools these symptoms will probably get worse, for example:

* The numbness in your hands could become permanent and you won’t be able to feel things at all
* You will have difficulty picking up small objects such as screws or nails;
* The vibration white finger could happen more frequently and affect more of your fingers

**If you notice you are suffering with any of these symptoms you will need to inform your manager as soon as possible for them to refer you to occupational health.**

**Employee Checklist**

* Always follow risk assessments and safe working procedures
* If you have any problems , tell your supervisor- **Don’t just carry on working**
* Use maintain and store your PPE in accordance with instructions
* Attend for all health surveillance appointments

More information on HAVS can be found on the health and safety executive website

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/VIBRATION/hav/>

*For further information please contact the occupational health department on 01484 471800 or* email us at [occupational.health@hud.ac.uk](mailto:occupational.health@hud.ac.uk)