Vibration white finger

**Explain dangers**

Vibration white finger, also known as “Raynaud’s syndrome”, is a disease that makes your fingers turn become pale, waxy-white, or purplish. It occurs when your hands are exposed to too much vibration from tools and equipment.

Vibration white finger damages blood vessels, nerves, and muscles.

There are several symptoms:
- Numbness and tingling in fingers
- Whitening—first your fingertips, then your whole finger
- Spasms in fingers
- Attacks lasting up to half an hour—often with whiteness changing to deep red and fingers becoming very painful
- Permanent loss of feeling in your fingertips
- Reduced grip strength
- Attacks that become more frequent and painful.

Tool and equipment operators are at the most risk. Their hands are often exposed to high levels of vibration.

High-vibration equipment includes road drills, chipping hammers, compactors, and chainsaws.

Risk depends on the following factors:
- How long the vibrating tool or equipment is used
- Whether operation is off-and-on or continuous
- Workplace temperatures (cold is a major trigger)
- Whether or not you smoke (smoking reduces blood flow to your fingers)
- The magnitude (acceleration) of vibration.

For example, tools such as impact wrenches, chainsaws, and jackhammers can be high-risk if workers use them more than 60 minutes in total per day.

**Identify controls**

- Where possible, do the job without using vibrating tools or equipment.
- Use tools with built-in anti-vibration features.
- Wear anti-vibration gloves (as classified under ISO Standard 10819).
- Don’t use vibrating tools and equipment for long periods, especially in the cold. Short bursts are better.
- Follow an appropriate work/rest schedule. Rotate between different jobs or take more breaks.
- During work breaks, move and massage your fingers.
- Don’t hold vibrating tools tightly. Rest them on the work surface or workpiece if possible.
- Using tools with good ergonomic design will also help.
- Keep your whole body warm—your hands and chest especially.
- Don’t smoke. Nicotine narrows your blood vessels, which limits your circulation.
- Keep equipment in good condition. Poorly maintained equipment can produce excess vibration.
- Report poorly functioning tools to your supervisor immediately. Newer tools tend to have more anti-vibration properties.
- Exercise regularly. It can help you maintain a healthy blood circulation and reduce stress.
- Don’t ignore signs and symptoms. See your doctor right away if you experience tingling, numbness, etc.

**Demonstrate**

Ask the crew to describe any problems they have had with vibrating tools and equipment. Have they experienced any symptoms of VWF?