

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?