

Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome / VWF

A guide to compensation

Expert advice

Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) is the collective term which is largely made up of two conditions, Vibration White Finger (VWF) and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) which affect the hands, wrists, arms or fingers and are caused by prolonged exposure to handheld vibration tools.

Slater and Gordon has a team of Industrial Illness experts who have a vast amount of experience in dealing with HAVS and can ensure that the best possible outcome to any case is achieved.

What are the causes of HAVS?

HAVS is caused by prolonged use of handheld vibration tools which are usually powered by electricity, air or fuel such as petrol or diesel. Such tools include:

- jackhammers
- chainsaws
- power wrenches
- lawnmowers / strimmers / hedge trimmers
- pneumatic drills
- grinders
- hammer drills
- sanders

What type of industry is at risk?

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) there are millions of people at risk of developing this type of injury.

There is a risk for any industry where there is a use of power tools, such as:

- construction
- mechanics
- engineering
- forestry and gardening maintenance
- foundries

What form of protection is in place?

All employers have to follow certain health, safety and welfare regulations to ensure that their employees are adequately protected from accidents and illnesses in the workplace. This includes the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005.



What are the symptoms of HAVS?

Pins and needles or a tingling sensation which feels numb on recovery are classic symptoms of HAVS. Sufferers can often experience a coldness or whitening of their fingers. Thumbs as well as fingers can also be affected.

Symptoms will usually begin with the tips of the fingers and as the condition worsens, the whitening progresses down the fingers.

Another symptom which some people experience is a reduction in grip strength and loss of dexterity. When this occurs, they can often find simple tasks difficult, such as tying shoe laces and fastening buttons.

Once the symptoms have developed, the effects are permanent and in cold conditions, symptoms can often intensify.

If someone suffering from HAVS continues to use vibrating power tools, their symptoms may become much worse.

There are occasions when symptoms become so bad that the sufferer is no longer able to work.

Advice on making a claim for compensation

For those who don't have experience of the legal process, contacting a lawyer and making a claim for compensation can be a daunting prospect. However, we're with our clients every step of the way, ensuring they understand the claims process, and relieving the burden of having to deal with a variety of practical issues, at what can be a difficult time.



What should you do if you think you have a claim?

Contact us. Our team of specialists have a vast amount of experience in dealing with cases of HAVS.

Once we've taken details, we'll confirm whether or not you have a claim. If you are entitled to compensation, we can start work on your case straightaway and begin gathering evidence.

Time limits apply when making a claim for compensation, so don't delay in contacting us.

What is the cost of making a claim?

We understand that the cost of legal advice can be a worry, but there are options available to fund injury claims.

You may have legal expenses insurance under an existing insurance policy which entitles you to free representation. If legal expenses insurance is not in place, we may be able to conduct your case under a Conditional Fee Agreement, also known as a 'No Win, No Fee' Agreement. This means if the case fails, no payment is due.

Once we know the circumstances of your claim, we'll be able to discuss your funding options in more detail.

What is the amount of compensation likely to be?

Compensation will be based on the severity of your condition, and also on your personal circumstances. For example, if you've been unable to work as a result of your condition, loss of earnings may be accounted for. If you were responsible for household chores or caring for a dependent and are no longer able to, the cost of assistance will be taken into account.

How long is the case likely to take?

Every case is different so it's difficult to estimate how long a case is likely to take without first reviewing the circumstances.

However, the case will be dealt with by an expert in cases of HAVS who will deal with the case as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Frequently asked questions

Will I have to go to court?

A large majority of cases settle before a trial takes place. However, if the case doesn't settle before trial, attendance at court may be necessary.

Can I claim compensation if my employer has gone out of business?

Don't worry if the company has gone out of business. It's often still possible to trace their insurers. Our industrial illness team has unrivalled expertise in tracing insurers of companies which have been out of business for many years. We often take over cases and succeed in tracing the company's insurers where other firms have failed.

Will I have to attend a medical appointment?

If we advise you that we are able to pursue a claim for HAVS on your behalf, you will have to attend an independent medical appointment in order for us to obtain a report as part of your evidence.

It will also benefit you as it will help determine whether you need any medical assistance.

What if I need assistance in other areas?

We have expert lawyers in many areas of law such as family, employment, welfare benefits, trusts, Court of Protection and disability rights and work closely with those departments to ensure that you get the best possible outcome.