

WORK RELATED HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT MAY AFFECT THE UPPER LIMBS



How to recognise the signs and symptoms of upper limb disorders, with practical advice to help protect your health at work

WHAT ARE UPPER LIMB DISORDERS: Health problems that affect any part of the body between the fingertips to the neck are known as upper limb disorders. Common conditions that affect the hand and wrist area include vibration

white finger, carpal tunnel syndrome, ganglions and tenosynovitis.

Conditions affecting the lower and upper arm include epicondylitis, shoulder tendonitis and frozen shoulder. Cervical spondylosis is a common condition of the neck and spine.

HOW TO RECOGNISE THEM:

CONDITION	SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS
Vibration White Finger	Numbness, coldness and tingling (pins & needles) of fingers
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome	Numbness and tingling of the thumb, index/ ring and or middle finger that may occur after work at night
Ganglions	A lump on the back of the hand or wrist
Tenosynovitis	Aching wrist, weakened hand-grip and swelling
Epicondylitis	Pain/swelling on the outer-side of the elbow (golfers elbow) or inner-side of the elbow (tennis elbow)
Shoulder Tendonitis	Uncomfortable rotation of the arm and/or pain when moving the arm away from the body
Frozen Shoulder	Upper arm pain and difficulty in raising the arms above shoulder height
Cervical Spondylosis	Neck pain and stiffness, occasional associated with headache

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH AT WORK: It is important to remember that many upper limb disorders are not caused by work. Nevertheless, work can make the signs and symptoms worse.

The main causes of symptoms at work include poor manual handling practices, repetitive actions, poor posture and tasks that involve over reaching, holding too much weight, over stretching, not taking sufficient rest breaks and forceful activities. Staff regularly using hand-held machinery that vibrates may be at risk of developing vibration white finger.

- Don't forget to follow manual handling guidance and safe systems of work from your Manager.
- Take your breaks and rotate from repetitive tasks regularly throughout the day.

An upper limb disorder does not mean you have to leave your job. The most important advice is not to suffer in silence.

If you begin to develop the signs and symptoms of an upper limb disorder, inform your Manager and the Occupational Health Practitioner on extension 2575 or email: m.lake@bangor.ac.uk.

For further advice please visit the HSS Website www.hss.bangor.ac.uk/hss/wellness.

