

Poor work ability may predict faster deterioration of health

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Poor work ability in midlife may be associated with an accelerated deterioration of health and functioning in old age, states a study published in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

In a 28-year follow-up population-based study, Finnish researchers studied middle-aged white-collar and blue-collar employees to see if a person's work ability in midlife might predict their risk of death or disability.

In 1981, a total of 5971 employees aged 44-58 reported on their perceived work ability as part of a [longitudinal study](#) hosted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational [Health](#). By 2009, altogether 1918 persons had died and the ability to perform daily activities was assessed among 2879 respondents.

"We found that work ability in midlife predicted decline in health and functioning among men and women during the 28-year follow-up even after adjustments for health and [lifestyle factors](#)," writes Dr. Mikaela von Bonsdorff, Gerontology Research Centre, University of Jyväskylä, Finland with coauthors. "The risks showed similar gradients among blue- and white-collar employees, but the risk of death was generally higher among blue-collar employees."

The authors conclude that, "perceived work ability in midlife correlates with mortality among blue-collar and white-collar employees, and work ability in midlife predicts disability in old age. It is plausible that a

person's capacity to perform activities in relation to the demands posed by their age-appropriate role in society tracks through decades. The current work ability of middle-aged [employees](#) could therefore be considered as an early predictor of functioning in old age."

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