

# Discrepancy between disease activity, disability in early RA

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(HealthDay) -- For patients with early rheumatoid arthritis, there is a discrepancy between disease activity and disability, with women experiencing more disability than men, according to a Swedish study published online March 5 in *Arthritis Care & Research*.

Eva Hallert, Ph.D., of Linköping University in Sweden, and associates followed 149 patients diagnosed with recent-onset [rheumatoid arthritis](#) for eight years to compare the course of disease activity and disability for men and women. Disease activity and disability were assessed using the 28-count disease activity score, a visual analog scale for pain, Grip Ability Test, Signals of Functional Impairment for hands and upper extremities, walking speed, and the Health Assessment Questionnaire

(HAQ).

The researchers identified a similar disease activity pattern for both sexes, showing improvement in the first year and a stable situation during six years. Deterioration was seen at the seven- and eight-year follow-ups, with a less favorable course in women. At diagnosis, the HAQ was similar between the sexes, but women had significantly higher scores than men at all follow-ups. While disease-modifying anti-rheumatoid drug prescription was similar for both sexes, data showed women had lower grip force and walking speed and higher upper extremity mobility than men.

"Despite similar medication, women had more disability than men," the authors write. "The [discrepancy](#) between disease activity and disability indicates unmet needs for multi-professional interventions to prevent progressing disability, and patients at risk for disability need to be identified early in the process."

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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