

# Early therapy for rheumatoid arthritis may slow heart disease

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(HealthDay)—Disease-modifying antirheumatic drug (DMARD)

therapy for rheumatoid arthritis (RA) treatment also cuts cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk, according to a study published online Aug. 28 in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*.

Sven Plein, M.D., Ph.D., from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom, and colleagues randomly assigned 81 patients with early RA to either etanercept (ETN) + methotrexate (MTX) or to MTX strategy (with or without month 6 escalation to ETN+MTX) to assess if CVD is modifiable with DMARD therapy. Patients had no known CVD history and a maximum of one traditional risk factor (excluding diabetes).

The researchers found that among all [patients](#), aortic distensibility improved significantly from baseline to year 1, and this improvement was maintained at year 2. There was no difference in aortic distensibility improvement between the two treatment groups. Additionally, clinical response to therapy did not affect CVD markers.

"The benefits of RA treatment on CVD extend beyond traditional suppression of inflammation," a coauthor said in a statement. "Until further data are acquired, these data also suggest we should be cautious if considering a reduction in RA therapy (due to good joint control) for concern of risk of CVD progression."

Two authors disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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