

Resource

CoVAD Study: Understanding what affects physical ability in people with rheumatoid arthritis

Article: Determinants of physical function, as measured using PROMIS PF-10a, in patients with rheumatoid arthritis: results from the international COVID-19 Vaccination in Autoimmune Diseases (COVAD) study

Print



NRAS is pleased to have supported the international COVAD study by helping to share the survey with people living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). This important research looked at what affects physical ability in those with RA, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to your voice of patients, we now have a better understanding of how symptoms like pain and fatigue, as well as access to care, impact daily life. We're pleased to share the outcomes of this study with our RA community, helping to highlight the importance of good disease management and equal access to treatment for all.

Lay summary

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a life-long illness where the body's own immune system mistakenly attacks the joints. This causes swelling, pain, and stiffness, and over time it can damage joints and make everyday activities, like walking, climbing stairs, or carrying groceries, very difficult.

This study asked more than 1,300 people with RA from many countries about their health and daily lives. The results showed that people who were older, women, had RA for a long time, felt very tired, or had more pain tended to struggle more with physical function. On the other hand, people who felt healthier overall, could do everyday tasks, or lived in wealthier countries, usually managed better.

The most important message is that controlling RA early and keeping the disease under control is key to helping patients stay active and independent. While living in a high-income country was linked to better outcomes, the study also shows how vital it is to ensure fair access to good treatments and care everywhere, so that people with RA, no matter where they live, can enjoy a better quality of life.

Rheumatoid Arthritis & Your Body

Your Physical Function

“Physical function” refers to how well you’re able to move and perform everyday activities – like walking, climbing stairs, using your hands, or getting dressed. In our recent research study on people living with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), we found several key factors that can affect physical function. The good news? Many of these can be managed or improved with

What Affects Your Physical Abilities?

1. **Older Age:** As we age, it can be harder to stay mobile, especially with RA. Muscle strength and joint flexibility often decrease over time.
2. **Female Gender:** In our study, women reported more limitations in physical function.
3. **Longer Duration of RA:** The longer you’ve had RA, the more it may affect your joints and daily movement, especially if not well controlled early on.
4. **Higher Levels of Fatigue:** Fatigue is common in RA and can make it harder to stay active or complete everyday tasks.
5. **Feeling More Pain:** Ongoing pain can limit movement, cause stiffness, and reduce your ability to do things like walk, climb stairs, or grip objects.

Take Back Control Where You Can!

- Keep your body moving (even gently), eat well, manage stress, and follow your treatment plan.
- Talk to your doctor about your goals and make sure to care for any other health conditions too, it all adds up!

To read further about the CoVAD study, please click [here](#).

This article was downloaded from www.nras.org.uk. National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) is a registered charity in England and Wales (1134859) and Scotland (SC039721). A private company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales (7127101).