

How Do I Know If My RA Drug Is Working?

Doctors now know that a better way to manage rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is called a "treat-to-target" strategy. What is the target?

- "Remission," which means the RA is not damaging your body any more; or
- "Low activity," which means the RA is active but only mildly.

To get to the target, doctors must see their patients every 1 to 3 months. An important part of every visit is when the doctor checks, or measures, your current level of disease activity.

Doctors Must Regularly Check Your Disease Activity

The doctor can choose from several tools that can measure your level of disease, such as:

- DAS28, or the Disease Activity Score (based on a 28-joint examination)
- CDAI, or the Clinical Disease Assessment Index
- SDAI, or the Simplified Disease Activity Index



At times, the doctor may also use a tool that has you rate your disease level. When you rate your own disease level, it's called patient-reported outcomes. You can do this with tools such as:

- RAPID 3, or Routine Assessment of Patient Index Data
- HAQ, or Health Assessment Questionnaire
- VAS, or Visual Analogue Scale

Know Your Numbers

When you know what your disease activity scores mean, you can better discuss how to manage your RA with your doctor. Below are the scoring categories for 3 of the commonly used tools.

Tool	Remission	Low Disease Activity	Moderate Disease Activity	High Disease Activity
DAS28	Less than 2.6	2.6 to 3.2	3.2 to 5.1	More than 5.1
CDAI	Less than 2.8	2.8 to 10.0	10.0 to 22.0	More than 22.0
SDAI	Less than 3.3	3.3 to 11.0	11.0 to 26.0	More than 26.0

If your doctor tells you that your SDAI score is 3.2, then you are "in remission" and the RA is no longer active. If she tells you that your DAS28 score is 4.5, then your disease is moderately active, and she may discuss changing your medications.



You Can Help Manage Your RA

You and your doctor can now choose from among several medications to customize a program that will work to get you to remission or low disease activity. Thus, many people with RA can now look forward to an improved quality of life.