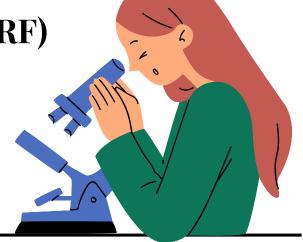


**Understanding Your Positive Rheumatoid Factor (RF)** 

What You Need to Know







### What is Rheumatoid Factor (RF)?

- A blood test: RF measures an antibody (a protein made by the immune system).
- A clue, not a diagnosis: It helps doctors evaluate for rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and some other conditions, but it is not the full answer.
- **Common in RA:** Many people with RA have a positive RF, but not all.

## **Common Questions**



#### Why did my doctor order this test?

 To investigate joint pain or swelling and to help rule in or rule out RA and other conditions.

#### Can RF levels change over time?

 Yes. RF can increase, decrease, or stay stable. Doctors usually don't follow the number closely, your symptoms matter more.

# Does a positive RF mean I will get RA later?

 Not always. Some people with positive RF never develop RA.
Doctors look at your overall risk, family history, and symptoms.

# If I already have RA, do I need RF checked again?

 Usually no. Once RF is known, your doctor focuses on your disease activity and how well treatment is working.





### What RF Is

- A blood test that may help explain symptoms like joint pain, swelling, or stiffness.
- A useful piece of information for your doctor, alongside your symptoms, exam, imaging, and other labs.
- A test that can show up positive in:
  - Rheumatoid arthritis
  - Other autoimmune diseases (like Sjögren's, lupus)
  - Chronic infections (like hepatitis C, tuberculosis)
  - o Sometimes healthy older adults

### What RF Is Not

- Not a guarantee of RA Many healthy people with a positive RF never develop RA.
- Not required to have RA Up to 30% of RA patients have a negative RF ("seronegative RA").
- Not a disease severity test A higher number doesn't always mean your arthritis is worse.
- Not a treatment guide Doctors don't use RF alone to decide medications.

# What This Means for You

RF is only one piece of the diagnostic process.

Your rheumatologist will focus more on:

- Your symptoms (how you feel day to day)
- Physical exam findings (joint swelling, tenderness)
- Imaging and inflammation markers

Together, these pieces provide the full picture.





### **Key Takeaways**

- RF is a supportive test, not a definitive answer.
- Both positive and negative results must be interpreted in the context of your symptoms.
- Having a positive RF does not automatically mean you have RA.
- Your rheumatologist will help interpret your results and guide next steps.

