



Pets and well-being

According to the American Psychological Association, pet owners are just as close to their pets as they are to the most important people in their lives. It's estimated that 70% of U.S. households have a pet. While ownership requires time and commitment, it can also bring many rewards and health benefits — including unconditional love, companionship, service and emotional support — that boost overall well-being. Following are some other health benefits that can result from having a furry or feathered friend.



Social connectedness – Having pets may promote social interactions with others in the community. They provide the opportunity to meet new people, receive friendly glances, build new friendships and engage in interesting conversations. All kinds of pets, including dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, hamsters even pot-bellied pigs, can foster connections.

Improved heart health – Studies show that owning a pet is associated with better heart health and lower blood pressure in response to mental stress (Hypertension, April 2018). The American Heart Association says owning a pet can help lower unhealthy cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Increased physical activity – Studies have shown that people who own dogs were consistently more active than people who didn't own dogs. In fact, dog owners in the United Kingdom are four times more likely to get at least 150 minutes of exercise than non-dog owners (Scientific Reports, 2019). Owning pets may also be associated with a lower risk of obesity.

Prevent loneliness – Pets provide social support to people, especially to those who live alone. According to a 2019 report by the Human Animal Bond Research Institute and Mars Petcare, 80% of pet owners said their pet made them feel less lonely.

Improved mental health – Pets provide social and emotional support, which has been found to have a positive effect on mood and overall mental health. Studies show long-term pet ownership is linked to slower decline in cognition over time (American Academy of Neurology 2022). Pet ownership also has been linked with improved emotional stability, and an increased sense of meaning and purpose. Bonding with pets has been found to reduce cortisol levels, feelings of stress, anxiety and depression.

Barrier to allergies – Growing up with pets in the home or on the farm strengthens the immune system. According to a 2011 study published in Clinical & Experimental Allergy, "Children who grow up with a cat or dog in the home are less likely to be allergic to them later in life, but only if the pet was present when they were infants."

Sources: everydayhealth.com*, webmd.com*

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