

How pets boost your health

Owning a pet is good for your health and happiness.

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Pets aren't just a fun member of the family, they also bring plenty of benefits for your general wellbeing too.



Helping physical health

People with pets are more likely to be active than people without a furry friend. Taking the dog for daily walks, playing with a cat or guinea pig or chasing a rabbit or tortoise around the garden gets you moving your body and out in the fresh air too.

Supporting wellbeing

Spending time with your pet improves your mood by releasing “happy” hormones (chemicals) in your brain. Stroking your dog or hearing your cat purr helps you to relax. Talking to your pet, particularly if you speak about your worries or something you're finding difficult, can be comforting and helps you to feel better. When you're with your pet you can let go of problems or anxious feelings as you give them your full attention. Veterinary nurse Beccie Crossman says a pet can help you deal with difficult emotions such as grief, too. “When a pet dies you feel sad and cry, which is ok and normal,” she says. “Then as you talk about your pet and remember them, and time goes on, you feel a bit better. This is the grief process and helps you later on in life.”

Boost your brainpower

Having an animal in the family helps you learn new skills, like how to teach them to obey commands such as “Sit” or “Lie down”, or to do tricks. Weighing out correct quantities of food, checking their water supply, creating obstacle courses or making up games allows you to practise being responsible and being creative. Reading or explaining schoolwork to your pet, or just being close to them, can help you to focus and concentrate better. Learning how to care for a pet, understanding what they need and ensuring they're safe, happy and healthy, teaches empathy (understanding others' feelings). Pets can also help your family get to know other dog owners on walks, or help you make friends as you share photos and funny stories about your pet with others.