

ABC Chronicle

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The Power of Pets Health Benefits of Human-Animal Interactions

Nothing compares to the joy of coming home to a loyal companion. The unconditional love of a pet can do more than keep you company. Pets may also decrease stress, improve heart health, and even help children with their emotional and social skills.

An estimated 68% of U.S. households have a pet. But who benefits from an animal? And which type of pet brings health benefits?

Over the past 10 years, NIH has partnered with the Mars Corporation's WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition to answer questions like these by funding research studies.

Scientists are looking at what the potential physical and mental health benefits are for different animals—from fish to guinea pigs to dogs and cats.

Possible Health Effects

Research on human-animal interactions is still relatively new. Some studies have shown positive health effects, but the results have been mixed.

Interacting with animals has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone) and lower blood pressure. Other studies have found that animals can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and boost your mood.

The NIH/Mars Partnership is funding a range of studies focused on the relationships we have with animals. For example, researchers are looking into how animals might influence child development. They're studying animal interactions with kids who have autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and other conditions.

"There's not one answer about how a pet can help somebody with a specific condition," explains Dr. Layla Esposito, who oversees NIH's Human Animal-Interaction Research Program. "Is your goal to increase physical activity? Then you might benefit from owning a dog. You have to walk a dog several times a day and you're going to increase physical activity. If your goal is reducing stress, sometimes watching fish swim can result in a feeling of calmness. So there's no one type fits all."

NIH is funding large-scale surveys to find out the range of pets people live with and how their relationships with their pets relate to health.

"We're trying to tap into the subjective quality of the relationship with the animal—that part of the bond that people feel with animals—and how that translates into

some of the health benefits," explains Dr. James Griffin, a child development expert at NIH.

Animals Helping People

Animals can serve as a source of comfort and support. Therapy dogs are especially good at this. They're sometimes brought into hospitals or nursing homes to help reduce patients' stress and anxiety.

"Dogs are very present. If someone is struggling with something, they know how to sit there and be loving," says Dr. Ann Berger, a physician and researcher at the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. "Their attention is focused on the person all the time."

Berger works with people who have cancer and terminal illnesses. She teaches them about mindfulness to help decrease stress and manage pain.

"The foundations of mindfulness include attention, intention, compassion, and awareness," Berger says. "All of those things are things that animals bring to the table. People kind of have to learn it. Animals do this innately."

Researchers are studying the safety of bringing animals into hospital settings because animals may expose people to more germs. A current study is looking at the safety of bringing dogs to visit children with cancer, Esposito says. Scientists will be testing the children's hands to see if there are dangerous levels of germs transferred from the dog after the visit.

Dogs may also aid in the classroom. One study found that dogs can help children with ADHD focus their attention. Researchers enrolled two groups of children diagnosed with ADHD into 12-week group therapy



sessions. The first group of kids read to a therapy dog once a week for 30 minutes. The second group read to puppets that looked like dogs.

Kids who read to the real animals showed better social skills and more sharing, cooperation, and volunteering. They also had fewer behavioral problems.

Another study found that children with autism spectrum disorder were calmer while playing with guinea pigs in the classroom. When the children spent 10 minutes in a supervised group playtime with guinea pigs, their anxiety levels dropped. The children also had better social interactions and were more engaged with their peers. The researchers suggest that the animals offered unconditional acceptance, making them a calm comfort to the children.

“Animals can become a way of building a bridge for those social interactions,” Griffin says. He adds that researchers are trying to better understand these effects and who they might help.

Animals may help you in other unexpected ways. A recent study showed that caring for fish helped teens with diabetes better manage their disease. Researchers had a group of teens with type 1 diabetes care for a pet fish twice a day by feeding and checking water levels. The caretaking routine also included changing the tank water each week. This was paired with the children reviewing their blood glucose (blood sugar) logs with parents.

Researchers tracked how consistently these teens checked their blood glucose. Compared with teens who weren’t given a fish to care for, fish-keeping teens were more disciplined about checking their own blood glucose levels, which is essential for maintaining their health.

While pets may bring a wide range of health benefits, an animal may not work for everyone. Recent studies suggest that early exposure to pets may help protect young children from developing allergies and asthma. But for people who are allergic to certain animals, having

pets in the home can do more harm than good.

Helping Each Other

Pets also bring new responsibilities. Knowing how to care for and feed an animal is part of owning a pet. NIH/Mars funds studies looking into the effects of human-animal interactions for both the pet and the person.

Remember that animals can feel stressed and fatigued, too. It’s important for kids to be able to recognize signs of stress in their pet and know when not to approach. Animal bites can cause serious harm.

“Dog bite prevention is certainly an issue parents need to consider, especially for young children who don’t always know the boundaries of what’s appropriate to do with a dog,” Esposito explains.

Researchers will continue to explore the many health effects of having a pet. “We’re trying to find out what’s working, what’s not working, and what’s safe—for both the humans and the animals,” Esposito says.

Reprinted from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov>

Health Risks from Your Pet

Kids, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems are at greater risk for getting sick from animals. Take these steps to reduce your risk:

- **Wash your hands thoroughly after contact with animals.**
- **Keep your pet clean and healthy, and keep vaccinations up to date.**
- **Supervise children when they’re interacting with animals.**
- **Prevent kids from kissing their pets or putting their hands or other objects in their mouths after touching animals.**
- **Avoid changing litter boxes during pregnancy. Problems with pregnancy may occur from exposure to toxoplasmosis, a parasitic disease spread through the feces of infected cats.**

Avoiding Anemia **Boost Your Red Blood Cells**

If you're feeling constantly exhausted and sluggish, you might have a condition called anemia. Anemia is a common blood disorder that many people develop at some point in their lives.

Many types of anemia are mild and short term. But the condition can become serious if left untreated for a long time. The good news is that anemia often can be prevented and easily corrected by getting enough iron.

Anemia arises when your body doesn't have enough healthy red blood cells. You may either have too few red blood cells, or they may be lacking in an iron-rich protein called hemoglobin. Red blood cells are responsible for delivering oxygen throughout your body, and hemoglobin is the protein that carries the oxygen.

When the number of red blood cells or your hemoglobin level is too low, your body doesn't get all of the oxygen it needs, and that can make you feel very tired. You may also have other symptoms, such as shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, pale skin, or cold hands and feet.

The most common type of anemia occurs when your body lacks iron. This condition is called iron-deficiency anemia, and it often arises if you don't have enough iron in your diet. Your body needs iron and other nutrients to make hemoglobin and healthy red blood cells. So it's important to get a regular supply of iron as well as vitamin B12, folate, and protein. You can get these nutrients by eating a balanced diet or taking dietary supplements.

Another common cause of iron-deficiency anemia is blood loss, which might arise from injury, childbirth, or surgery. Women of child-bearing age are at risk for iron-deficiency anemia due to blood loss from menstrual periods.

Women also need extra iron during pregnancy. Dr. Harvey Luksenburg, a specialist in blood diseases at NIH, says that if anemia isn't treated during pregnancy, women can give birth to iron-deficient children. This lack of iron can affect a child's growth rate and brain development.

"Women who feel symptoms of sluggishness and fatigue may be iron deficient," Luksenburg says. "Even if you've lived with it a long time, get it checked. I've seen startling changes when women were put on iron supplements. Some say they've never felt better."

Many people living with anemia may not realize they have it. They might have mild symptoms or none at all. A doctor can determine whether you have anemia by a simple blood test.

Common types of anemia can be prevented and treated by eating iron-rich foods. The best sources are red meat (especially beef and liver), poultry, fish, and shellfish. Other foods high in iron include peas, lentils, beans, tofu, dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, dried fruits such as prunes and raisins, and iron-fortified cereals and breads.

NIH researchers are studying how to treat rarer, more severe forms of anemia. Some types can be treated with medicines. Severe cases may require blood transfusions or surgery.

If you don't get enough iron from your food, ask your doctor about taking iron dietary supplements. The body absorbs iron from meat and fish better than that from vegetables. If you're a vegetarian, consult a health care provider to make sure you're getting enough iron.

Making healthy lifestyle choices, including a nutritious, iron-rich diet, can help prevent common types of anemia so you can have more energy and feel your best.

Reprinted from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov>

Preventing Anemia

To prevent or treat iron-deficiency anemia:

- Eat foods rich in iron and B vitamins.
- Eat fruits and vegetables high in vitamin C, which helps your body absorb iron.
- Ask your doctor about iron supplements if you don't get enough iron in your diet.
- Get checked every year or 2 if you're a woman of child-bearing age who has heavy menstrual periods or a previous diagnosis of anemia.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Members of The American Business Coalition will be held at 9800 Talking Stick Way, Scottsdale, AZ 85256, on Wednesday, December 4, 2019 at 11:30 a.m. (MST) for election of Directors and for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting and any adjournment thereof.

The above notice is given pursuant to the By-Laws of the Association.

PROXY **American Business Coalition** **December 4, 2019 Annual Meeting of Members** **THIS PROXY IS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF** **AMERICAN BUSINESS COALITION**

The undersigned member of the American Business Coalition does hereby constitute and appoint the President of the American Business Coalition, the true and lawful attorney(s) of the undersigned with full power of substitution, to appear and act as the proxy or proxies of the undersigned at the Annual Meeting of the Members of the American Business Coalition and at any and all adjournments thereof, and to vote for and in the name, place and stead of the undersigned, as fully as the undersigned might or could do if personally present, as set forth below:

1. FOR [], or to [] WITHHOLD AUTHORITY to vote for, the following nominees for Board of Directors: John Marshall, Suzanne Pattison, and Greg Peterson.
2. In their discretion, the proxies are authorized to vote upon such other business as may properly come before the Meeting.

This proxy, when properly executed, will be voted in the manner directed by the undersigned member. If no direction is made, this proxy will be voted for the election of directors and officers.

DATED: _____, 2019.

Signature _____

Name (please print) _____

Please date and sign and return promptly to 16476 Wild Horse Creek Road, Chesterfield, Missouri 63017 whether or not you expect to attend this meeting. The Proxy is revocable and will not affect your right to vote in person in the event that you attend the meeting.

Chesterfield, Missouri

November 1, 2019

Date

Welcome to MDLIVE!

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offered to our members - MDLive!

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- **Pay \$0 Out of Pocket for Medical consultations.**
- **3 FREE Talk Therapy consultations per person, per calendar year and then \$90 per hour.**
- **Dermatology consultations are \$59 per video consult.**

MDLive by the numbers:



1,806 visits
in Nov-18



12,558 visits
in 2018



1,937 activations
in Nov-18



16,832 activations
since inception

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Articles in this newsletter are meant to be informative, enlightening, and helpful to you. While all information contained herein is meant to be completely factual, it is always subject to change. Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.

