

Pets Can Help Boost Your Health

Animal At Home May Lower Blood Pressure

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Medical research is starting to show that having a pet may contribute to a longer life for you. In particular, the elderly or those who live alone may benefit most, but everyone is a potential beneficiary.

The University of Missouri's Rebecca Johnson says in a news release that, "Research in this field is providing new evidence on the positive impact pets have in our lives."

The health benefits include lower blood pressure, encouragement to exercise and improved psychological health.

Pets can contribute to improved health, but be aware that some pet diseases can be transmitted to humans. Proper care, cleanliness and attention to the animals health is a responsibility to the animal as well as insuring your continued good health.

CNN.com reports that a recent study by Dr. Karen Allen of the State University of New York at Buffalo looked at 48 stockbrokers with hypertension. Half the candidates adopted a cat or dog at the beginning of the study. After a significant period passed, stress tests that the ones without pets were twice as stressed.

The same report quoted Dr. Lynette Hart, associate professor at the University of California at Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.

"Studies have shown that Alzheimer's (disease) patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home," she said. "Their caregivers also feel less burdened when there is a pet, particularly if it is a cat, which generally requires less care than a dog."

Do these reports mean that everyone should dash out and purchase a cat or dog? That is definitely not the case. Each individual must evaluate their circumstances and determine the potential benefits and enjoyment of having a pet as opposed to the responsibilities, expense and any inconvenience that a pet might cause.

North Dakota State University stresses the requirements of time and expense in caring for a pet. Pets require health exams, immunizations and you should consider options such as neutering or spaying.

Also, people with allergies or asthma might not be able to have pets without adverse effects.

And animals can carry parasites and disease, so owners must take proper precautions. Washing hands after contact with animals is always a good thing. Checking animals for fleas, ticks and other parasites as well as regularly scheduled check-ups by veterinarians is a good idea.

Help In Nursing Homes

One of the positive benefits of having pets is to shift the focus from our own problems to the companionship factor that a pet brings. Our interactions with them get us involved in activities other than being totally introspective and dwelling on our problems, whether they be real or imagined.

Nursing homes have found that having animals brought in by outsiders to visit has a very positive effect on the mental state of the residents. Many who are withdrawn respond to the

affection of a friendly animal. Dogs are particularly good in this role because of their more affectionate nature with strangers. Cats can work in this role, but are sometimes more aloof. Animals such as dogs and monkeys acting as helpers for the blind or otherwise handicapped individuals have proved to be invaluable. Many of these people are able to be much more independent because of the companionship and assistance that these animals provide. Based on the overwhelming positive information available, we must conclude that animals definitely have a positive impact on the health of humans.

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