

The Benefits of our Furry Companions

A dog is a man's best friend! This saying has long been used but recent research suggests that dogs may be more than just loyal companions; they could play an active role in enhancing both physical and mental health.

A recent Swedish study explored the link between dog ownership and activity levels. Researchers surveyed over 1,400 individuals and assessed their physical activity using accelerometers. The results were compelling: dog owners engaged in an average of 19.2 additional minutes of daily light physical activity, 11.4 more minutes of daily moderate to vigorous activity, and did 1,738 more steps each day. Additionally, dog ownership was associated with twice the likelihood of meeting the recommended physical activity levels, underscoring the role dogs can play in encouraging a healthier, more active lifestyle.

Dogs have also been found to positively influence mental health. In one study, researchers examined the impact of therapy dogs on students during a stressful examination period. Students who interacted with therapy dogs reported a significant improvement in their Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) scores, a measure of emotional state. Also, most participants agreed that they felt calmer when they were with the dogs.

In conclusion, our furry companions might contribute our wellness both physically and mentally. By encouraging us to be more active and better emotionally, owning a dog might be the best way to keep life's troubles on a short *leash!*

Sources (click to access): [Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)

Report prepared by: Denia Hamidi, Medical Student, McGill University, MDCM Candidate
Class of 2027