

Get A Dog, Lose Weight

Study shows dog owners get more exercise than people without dogs.

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Weight Watchers' stockholders probably won't like to hear that the answer to long-term weight loss may not be weekly weigh-ins and points-tracking but the wagging, slobbering dog at their feet.

A study from the University of Victoria in British Columbia showed that dog owners walk an average of 300 minutes a week versus 160 minutes a week for those who are dog-less.

"We know that walking is good for people but we don't know how to get people to continue to do it," says Rebecca Johnson, a professor of nursing and the director of the College of Veterinary Medicine's Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Johnson was part of a University of Missouri team that examined whether making a commitment to walking a dog leads to increased exercise and weight loss.

The answer is yes, according to Johnson. The dog walkers lost an average of 14 pounds during the one-year study period. "That's a better result than most of the nationally known weight-loss plans," she says.