

Dog Owners Healthier Than Others

Benefits of ownership include lower blood pressure and cholesterol, according to study.

Posted: January 23, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

According to a new study published in a British medical journal, people who own dogs are healthier than those that don't.

Dog owners have lower cholesterol levels and lower blood pressure, and a greater likelihood of overall good health than those who did not own dogs, according to the study, the results of which are published in the current issue of the journal British Psychological Society.

Deborah Wells, a lecturer at the Canine Behavior Center of Queens University in Belfast, England, conducted the study.

"It is possible that dogs can directly promote our well-being by buffering us from stress," Well says in her report.

Because stress is a risk factor for a number of diseases, dog ownership, by reducing stress, reduces stress-related illnesses like heart disease, auto-immune diseases and some skin diseases and cancers, the study concluded.

The study found the benefits of dog ownership included increased physical activity as a result of walking, and increased social interactions, both of which contribute to improved health.