

# Responsible pet care associated with well-controlled blood sugar in diabetic children

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In a sample of young people with type I diabetes, those who actively helped care for family pets were 2.5 times more likely to have well-controlled blood sugar levels, according to a study published April 22, 2016 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Louise Maranda from University of Massachusetts Medical School, USA, and colleagues.

Attributes which aid in the effective self-management of type I diabetes, such as family cohesion and self-regulatory behavior, are similar to those required for responsible care of household pets. To investigate a possible positive association between [pet](#) care and self-care in chronic illness, the authors of the present case-controlled study surveyed 23 [young people](#) with type I diabetes on responsible pet ownership and analyzed the results with respect to successful self-management of their illness.

The researchers found that diabetic children who actively care for at least one household pet were 2.5 times more likely to maintain healthy [blood sugar](#) levels than children who did not care for a pet. The authors were careful to distinguish actual care responsibilities from the level of attachment to the pet, as some children professed love for their pet but were not involved in its care. The authors postulate that certain factors, for example the establishment of household routines and the promotion of feelings of responsibility, that help young people to care responsibly for pets may also help them to control their [blood sugar levels](#).

While the present study does not adjust for potential cultural differences in attitudes toward pets or diabetes care, and the study design does not

show causality, the authors suggest that their findings may help to identify attributes that support young people in self-management of type I [diabetes](#).

**More information:** Louise Maranda et al, Association between Responsible Pet Ownership and Glycemic Control in Youths with Type 1 Diabetes, *PLOS ONE* (2016). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0152332](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0152332)

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