

Fido or fluffy can bring you a big health boost

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(HealthDay)—Millions of Americans love their pets and spend lots of

money to keep them happy and healthy. But being a pet owner also has a lot of benefits for the human half of the relationship.

According to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, there are the physical boosts, like [lower blood pressure](#), lower heart rate and [lower cholesterol](#).

Being with your pet also reduces your response to stress and helps you to recover from it faster. Having a pet benefits kids in many ways, including helping them develop empathy. A pet can give you the same emotional connection as a human friend. And studies show that the more people benefit from their pets, they closer they tend to be to other people.

Dog owners of all ages are more likely to be physically active and less likely to be obese. For [older people](#), having a dog can keep them socially connected. And that's been shown to help people live longer, and avoid physical and [mental decline](#). Some [dogs](#) have special training to safeguard your health, like warning you before a seizure.

So how do you choose the right dog for your family? Start by thinking about your living space, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals suggests. Do you live in a house or a small apartment? Do you have a yard or live close to a dog park?

Next, think about your lifestyle. If you spend a lot of time indoors, you might want a dog that also enjoys being inside with people, like a Pug. If you're looking for an exercise companion or your family loves outdoor activities, a dog that loves being outside, like a Retriever, may be a good choice.

Think also about who'll be caring for your dog. Is that person up for long walks every day or will your dog be getting most of its exercise in your

backyard? If you've got kids, make sure any dog you're considering loves having kids touch and play with him or her. Also talk about kids' role in caring for the new family member. Having a pet is a great way to instill a sense of responsibility.

More information: For more tips on choosing a pet, visit the [ASPCA](#).

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