

Your heart's best friend: Dog ownership associated with better cardiovascular health

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Owning a pet may help maintain a healthy heart, especially if that pet is a dog, according to the first analysis of data from the Kardiozive Brno 2030 study. The study examines the association of pet

ownership—specifically dog ownership—with cardiovascular disease risk factors and cardiovascular health. The results are published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings: Innovations, Quality & Outcomes*.

The study first established baseline health and socio-economic information on more than 2,000 subjects in the city of Brno, Czech Republic, from January 2013 through Dec. 2014. Follow-up evaluations are scheduled for five-year intervals until 2030.

In the 2019 evaluation, the study looked at 1,769 subjects with no history of heart disease and scored them based on Life's Simple 7 ideal health behaviors and factors, as outlined by the American Heart Association: body mass index, diet, physical activity, smoking status, [blood pressure](#), blood glucose and total cholesterol.

The study compared the [cardiovascular health](#) scores of pet owners overall to those who did not own pets. Then it compared dog owners to other pet owners and those who did not own pets.

"In general, people who owned any pet were more likely to report more physical activity, better diet and blood sugar at ideal level," says Andrea Maugeri, Ph.D., a researcher with the International Clinical Research Center at St. Anne's University Hospital in Brno and the University of Catania in Catania, Italy. "The greatest benefits from having a pet were for those who owned a dog, independent of their age, sex and education level."

The study demonstrates an association between [dog ownership](#) and heart health, which is in line with the American Heart Association's scientific statement on the benefits of owning a dog in terms of [physical activity](#), engagement and reduction of cardiovascular disease risk.

Dr. Maugeri says that the study findings support the idea that people

could adopt, rescue or purchase a pet as a potential strategy to improve their cardiovascular health as long as pet ownership led them to a more physically active lifestyle.

Francisco Lopez-Jimenez, M.D., chair of the Division of Preventive Cardiology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, says that having a dog may prompt owners to go out, move around and play with their dog regularly. Owning a dog also has been linked to better mental health in other studies and less perception of social isolation—both risk factors for heart attacks. Dr. Lopez-Jimenez is a senior investigator of this study.

More information: Andrea Maugeri et al. Dog Ownership and Cardiovascular Health: Results From the Kardiovize 2030 Project, *Mayo Clinic Proceedings: Innovations, Quality & Outcomes* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.mayocpiqo.2019.07.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocpiqo.2019.07.007)

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