

# 4 ways pets are good for your health and well-being

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Many pet owners have found support from their pets throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and there's science to back up the physical and

mental health benefits to pet companionship. The American Heart Association, a global force for longer, healthier lives, and its Healthy Bond for Life™ initiative, offers four science-backed ways pets improve human quality of life as it brings back "Best Friend Fridays" this summer.

Each Friday in June, July and August, people are encouraged to share photos and videos on [social media](#) showing how their pets are helping them stress less and practice healthy habits using the hashtag #BestFriendFridays. Images and videos will be compiled into a photo mosaic shared on [healthybondforlife.heart.org](http://healthybondforlife.heart.org).

"Having a pet has been shown to combat stress, boost happiness and encourage healthy habits like [regular physical activity](#)," said Glenn Levine, MD, professor of medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of the cardiology section at Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, volunteer medical expert for the American Heart Association's Healthy Bond for Life and lead author of the Association's [Scientific Statement on Pet Ownership and Cardiovascular Risk](#).

"Staying active and reducing stress can help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, like heart disease and stroke, and keep your pet healthy as well. It's a win-win."

Here are four ways pets can positively impact their humans' health:

- Pets make work better. Studies show that pets in the workplace may help reduce stress, increase productivity and improve employee satisfaction.
- Pets get people moving. Dog owners are more likely to fit in the recommended physical activity than those who don't have a dog.
- Studies also show that [physical activity](#) is linked to lower risk of diseases and lower risk of depression.
- Pets help overcome loneliness. When owners see, touch, hear or

talk to their [companion animals](#), it brings a sense of goodwill, joy, nurturing and happiness., which helps suppress stress hormones.

- Pets can help speed up recovery after a cardiovascular event. Studies have shown an association between dog ownership and better health outcomes after a cardiovascular event, like a heart attack or stroke.

**More information:** For more information about Healthy Bond for Life, visit [healthybondforlife.heart.org](http://healthybondforlife.heart.org) Glenn N. Levine et al, Pet Ownership and Cardiovascular Risk, *Circulation* (2013). [DOI: 10.1161/CIR.0b013e31829201e1](#)

Workplace Wellness: [habri.org/research/mental-heal ... /workplace-wellness/](http://habri.org/research/mental-heal.../workplace-wellness/)

Dog ownership supports the maintenance of physical activity during poor weather in older English adults: cross-sectional results from the EPIC Norfolk cohort. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2017;71:905-911.

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