

Woof! for Your Health: Why Owning a Dog Could Be Good for You

By Richard Hansen

Every dog-owner knows how great it feels to have an eager pet greet you at the door after a long, hard work-day. They would also probably be hard-pressed to name a human companion who is as consistently enthusiastic and non-judgmental as their dog.

What dog-owners may not realize, however, is that scientists have shown owning a dog can actually be good for your health.

One specific group that benefits from having a dog around the house is children.

A recent study in the United Kingdom found that four and five year olds living in households with pets had higher school attendance than those who did not.

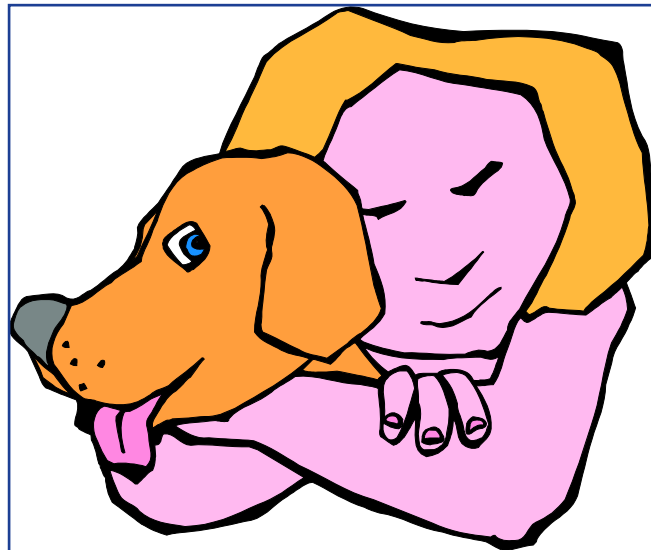
In addition to examining the attendance records of 256 children from ages 4 to 11, the researchers took saliva samples, which are viewed to be a reliable indicator of overall health.

The scientists who conducted the study have suggested that their findings point to a connection between growing up with a pet and having less sick-days.

In their opinion, this may be because having pets could cause children to develop a more robust immune system, as they receive greater exposure to certain germs and allergens.

This explanation is supported by other research showing children who grow up with pets are less likely to have asthma or allergies.

The health benefits of dogs, and pets in general, certainly are not limited to children. Adult dog-owners appear to be healthier than non-dog-owners on a variety of counts. This includes, on average, having lower cho-



lesterol, blood pressure and stress.

One study that supports this assertion examined two groups of New York stockbrokers who were being treated for high blood pressure.

One group of participants in the study owned either a dog or cat, while the others did not.

Stress tests were administered to each group. It was found that those with pets had lower blood pressure and heart rates at the end of the study.

Other scientists have also revealed that when people are completing high stress tasks, their stress levels drop when a pet dog is present.

The daily routine of taking a dog for a walk also has undeniable health benefits, as it is a low-impact form of physical activity that forces people to get outside and off the couch.

Among the elderly, dogs encourage psychological, as well as physical, well-being.

The company of a dog can offer a healthy mood boost and ease feelings of isolation for home-bound seniors.

Believe it or not, some nursing home residents have even reported feeling less lonely when they were visited by a dog than when spending time with other people.

As a result many nursing homes have chosen to adopt dogs, and some hospitals now employ "therapy" dogs for patients.

That is something to keep in mind next time you go to visit Great-Aunt Wilma and Fido is begging to come along.

Teen Depression: Not Having the Greatest Time of Their Lives

American teenagers now appear to be more unhappy than most adults assume, according to a report released by the Federal government last month.

The report, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, indicates that 8.5% of American teens claim to have experienced a major depressive episode in the past year.

The data was compiled from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health that examined the frequency

of major depressive episodes among youth ages 12 to 17 between 2004 and 2006.

The survey defined a major depressive episode as "a period of 2 weeks

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Dr. Carl's Corner



Although depression is the number one health problem for everyone age five and older, data from the World Health Organization has shown that brain problems are widely ignored and untreated throughout the world.

Unless properly diagnosed and treated, they can produce problems that affect all aspects of a person's life.

"Feeling depressed" does not necessarily mean a person has a diagnosis of major depression.

Many causes produce feelings that people refer to as "being blue," "sad," "down in the dumps," "in the pits" or "depressed."

According to the CDC, antidepressants are now the most prescribed drugs in America. But, about one in three patients fails to respond to them. Treatment failures occur for a number of reasons. Research estimates that

Teen Depression - Cont.

or longer during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure and at least four other symptoms such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration and self-image."

Depression appeared to be a greater problem among older teens, with 11.5% of 16 and 17 year olds reporting feeling depressed compared with 4.1% and 6.5% of 12 and 13 year olds, respectively.

The gender disparity between depressed teens is also cause for concern. 12.7% of girls admitted to suffering bouts of depression versus only 4.6% of boys.

fifty to eighty percent of patients do not take their antidepressants long enough to reduce the chances of a relapse.

"Depressed feelings" can also be caused by poor nutrition. Vitamin B-12 and folate deficiencies have been observed in about one-third of depressed patients. These vitamins are essential for mood, memory, focus and energy.

Self-selected diet may undermine normal brain development and function. Researchers found that fifty percent of vegetarians and eighty-five percent of vegans had Vitamin B-12 deficiency.

Protein restriction can also interfere with the action of antidepressant medication. Nearly all plant proteins lack a complete set of the essential amino acids. Amaranth is a noteworthy exception.

People living in countries where they regularly consume fish rich in DHA have lower rates of seasonal affective disorder and depression.

"Feeling depressed" can also result from Vitamin D deficiency. As people spend less time outside in the sun

and more time in front of televisions and computers, Vitamin D deficiency becomes more common. Vitamin D levels can be monitored by a simple blood test.

Economic forces lead to the use of higher risk and more costly strategies before safer and more economical strategies. As a result, there is a fundamental inversion of the health system.

America is not alone in neglecting brain health and medicine. Globally, medicine lacks a systematic approach to these problems.

The FAST System for GOOD HEALTH™ corrects this imbalance by providing a systematic and scientific approach to health and medicine:

- (F)ood Selection**
- (A)ctivity - mental and physical**
- (S)upplementation**
- (T)reatment**

Its simple, practical and scientifically sensible design is especially valuable for people who contend with brain problems.

Which Kind of Brain Do You Have?

We all know that some people are right-handed, while others are left-handed. But how often do we hear about being "left" or "right-brained?"

This concept is based upon the fact that the brain can be divided into left and right hemispheres, which are responsible for different types of thoughts and feelings.

Scientists have found that, just as people use one hand more than the other, most people tend to also have a dominant side of the brain that helps define their personality, interests and learning styles.

So how do you know if you are a left or right brain person? Below are a list of characteristic traits associated with each side of the brain:

Left Brain

- Concrete
- Linear
- Rational
- Objective
- Quantitative
- Reasoning
- Number Skills

Written Language and Grammar

Remembers names

Person who "sees the trees"

Prefers directions with words

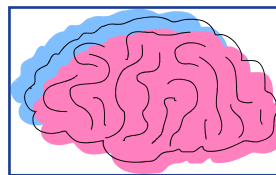
Right Brain

- Abstract
- Spatial
- Intuitive
- Subjective
- Qualitative
- Imaginative/Creative
- Artistic
- Musical

Remembers faces

Person who "sees the forest"

Prefers directions with pictures



Recognize yourself, your friends, spouse or co-workers in these lists?

Laurie's Corner

I've always wanted a vegetable garden and this year, I'm getting one! It will look similar to this picture since the major architect of our garden is Richard. This is the garden Richard planted when he was in high school. Since I didn't have the pleasure of becoming his stepmother until he was 15, I didn't have the opportunity to see his masterpiece in person.

We started talking about planting a garden earlier this year. This is what we've decided to plant: tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, green peppers, green peas, green beans (in honor of our friend, Betsy, who wrote the children's book, **Green Beans**), potatoes, corn (maybe) and some herbs. Our friend, Jerri, who grew up in Ukraine, endorsed our plans! She let us know what her mother always told her: "Grow everything you need to make a salad." I have a feeling her mom would approve, too!

I thought of calling it our "Depression Garden," as they did in the 1930's, due to the high and rising price of everything from fuel to food. Carl vetoed that name, preferring "Victory Garden" instead (and, Richard and I decided that was a better choice).

Many of you know how fortunate we are to live only three and a half blocks from our office so we save a lot on gas. We are able to walk everywhere - to work, grocery stores, the post office, the bank, a book store, a hardware store, restaurants, and, of course, our favorite bakery, Bellaria!

In addition to our garden, we have two apple and two cherry trees that Carl and Richard planted the year Richard left for college (4 years ago).

Carl's Uncle Eddie was an organic farmer in Le Sueur, MN. Carl and Richard learned so much from him and we will be applying his expert knowledge to our garden.

By the way, some of the healthiest and longest-lived Americans live in and around Le Sueur. We believe it is due, in part, to Eddie's fabulous produce. One of the basic tenets they learned from him was not to plant



until June 15th. It is then, Eddie asserted, that the ground is finally warm enough. There is the exception for potatoes; in mid-April, we planted 18 potatoes of 4 different varieties!

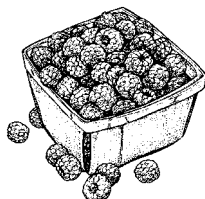
When I say "we," of course I mean "they." Carl and Richard are the "they." But, I will get my chance to participate in the harvesting and preparing of lots of wonderful meals!

In anticipation of the fruits of our labors, here are two more of my favorite salad recipes. As some of you know, I make salads every day for lunch for us in the office. And, we have a good friend, Eileen, who makes salads every night for dinner (year round) for she and her husband. For Eileen and me, making salads every day helps with that age-old question of "what's for dinner?" (and in my case, lunch, too)!

Raspberry Chicken Salad

Lettuce
Chicken breast - grilled, sliced or diced (can be served hot or cold)
Raspberries
Raspberry Dressing (we like Annie's)
Almonds, toasted

1. Wash, pat dry chicken breasts and grill.
2. Wash and pat or "spin dry" lettuce. Tear into bite-sized pieces.
3. Place remaining ingredients, in order, on lettuce.



Garden Chop Chop Serves 4

Lettuce
1 Cucumber
1 Avocado
1 cup Turkey or Chicken - cooked, sliced in 1"x1/4" strips
1/2 cup Salami - sliced in 1"x1/4" strips
3/4 cup Provolone cheese - sliced in 1"x1/4" strips
3/4 cup Garbanzo beans, drained
1 Tomato or 1/2 pint Cherry Tomatoes
1/4 small Red Onion, thinly sliced (optional)
Pepperoncini - 1 or 2 thinly sliced (optional)

Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Fresh Lemon Juice
Balsamic Vinegar
Parmesan Cheese, freshly grated
Toasted Pine Nuts or Toasted Slivered Almonds

1. Wash and pat or "spin dry" lettuce. Tear into bite-sized bits.
2. Wash, peel and cut cucumber into cubes.
3. Wash avocado and cut in half. Carefully remove pit. Remove skin and cut in cubes.
4. Wash tomato, cut in half horizontally, squeeze out seeds and dice. If using cherry tomatoes, wash and slice in half vertically.
5. Arrange the first 8-10 ingredients on salad plates in the order given or place in salad bowl. Toss - only if making it in a salad bowl.
6. Drizzle with olive oil, squeeze on lemon juice and splash on balsamic vinegar.
7. Top with Parmesan cheese and nuts.

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Activity

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What Kind of Brain Do You Want?



Energize Your Inner-Einstein

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