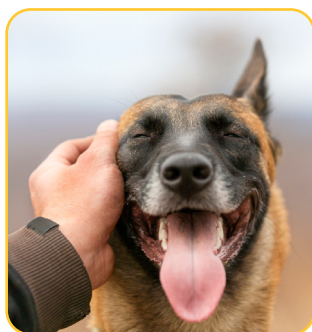




Benefits of Pet Parenting

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Pets can benefit humans in many ways. Pets can promote both emotional support and physical health.

If you own a dog, you know they need daily walks. Not only does this activity provide exercise for the dog, but for us, too. In humans, exercise reduces our risk of

heart disease, cancer and diabetes. A Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) study found dog ownership was associated with a 24% risk reduction for all-cause mortality compared to non-ownership. The study also suggests the relaxing nature of cats decreases the risk for death from heart attack in humans.

Emotionally, interacting with dogs can decrease our stress hormone cortisol and increase our positive feeling hormone oxytocin. As a result, blood pressure decreases and relaxation increases.

According to another HABRI survey, pets were also found to decrease our feelings of loneliness and isolation. Decreasing these feelings is important because they are linked with health concerns including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, dementia and addiction.

Considerations

Before you run out and adopt any pet, consider a few factors of pet parenting. If you want to reap the benefits of owning a pet, your pet needs to be happy and healthy. Therefore, consider time, space and money.

- **Time:** Do you have the time to care for your pet and make lifestyle changes?
- **Space:** Do you have enough space for your pet to survive and thrive?
- **Money/Cost:** Are you willing to spend money toward veterinary bills, toys, food or property damage?



Make sure the pet you choose matches your lifestyle.

Prevent Germs

Test Your Knowledge:

How often should you clean your pet's water bowl?

- A. Once a week
- B. Daily
- C. After every use



Answer: B. Daily

Humans can get germs from animals. Disease spread between animals and people is called zoonotic disease. If you want to stay healthy and keep your pets healthy, take precautions to prevent the spread of germs.

- **Hands:** Wash your hands after being around animals. Use soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, sanitize your hands with a sanitizer that's at least 60% alcohol.
- **Pet Supplies Cleaning Schedule:** Follow the CDC cleaning schedule recommending to clean wet food bowls after every use, pet blankets and beds weekly, and urine- and fecal-contaminated items immediately.
- **Yard:** Pick up feces in your yard with a plastic bag while wearing disposable gloves. Wash your hands after handling feces.
- **Petting Zoos:** Keep personal items away from animals and wash your hands immediately after the visit. Change clothes and remove shoes when you arrive home because clothes and shoes can track germs into your home.



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Diseases

Preventing germs is a big deal. Here are some examples of zoonotic diseases we are preventing:

■ Toxoplasmosis

- Shed in cat feces for up to three weeks after initial infection
- Can cause blindness or mental disability in a human fetus
- Pregnant women should avoid cleaning litter boxes, keep cats from eating creatures and wear gloves while gardening



■ Lyme

- Spread by bacteria from deer ticks
- In humans, Lyme may cause fever, aches, swollen lymph nodes and a circular rash
- Lyme vaccine is available for pets

■ Rabies

- A virus considered 100% fatal to animals and people
- Transmitted when infected saliva enters a wound or mucous membrane
- Vaccinate pets to prevent the spread

Toxic Treats

Avoid giving these foods to your pets:

- **Grapes:** Unknown toxin causes kidney failure
- **Xylitol:** Sugar substitute causing insulin spikes, vomiting, low blood sugar and seizures
- **Dark Chocolate:** Stimulant causing lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea and potentially death
- **Raw Animal Source Protein:** Can cause foodborne illness

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