

Healthy Reasons to Own (or Adopt) a Pet

Has your blood pressure dropped to within normal range? Are you feeling less stressed? Have you conquered your loneliness, regained your self-confidence? To some extent, you can thank your pet, some behavior experts say.

"In our fast-paced lives, animals are companions that offer great psycho-social benefits of love and companionship without too many demands," says Allen Schoen, DVM, M.S., director of the Veterinary Institute for Therapeutic Alternatives.

Many of us are already aware of the studies, which have shown how pets help lower a person's blood pressure, improve heart conditions, and melt away stress. We can attest to the times our pets have acted with compassion, good humor, and friendship as our guardian angels, muses, alarm clocks or heating pads. But here are some fact you may not know:

- Seniors who own animals go the the doctor less than those who do not (Siegel, 1990)
- Pet owners have lower triglyceride and cholesterol levels than non-owners. (Anderson, 1992)
- Companionship of pets helps children in families adjust better to serious illness and death of a parent, or divorce. (Raveis, 1993)
- Medication costs dropped from an average of \$3.80 per patient per day to just \$1.18 per patient per day in new nursing home facilities in New York, Missouri and Texas that have animals and plants as an integral part of the environment. (Montague, 1995)
- Having a pet may decrease heart attack mortality by 3%. This translates into 30,000 lives saved annually (Friedman, 1980)

Submitted by Kitsap Humane Society, reprinted courtesy Debbie Marion, A Country Veterinary Clinic, Belfair, Washington