

MEDIA RELEASE

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Promoting
Responsible
Dog
Ownership



A puppy a day...

Owning a dog as a pet at home can improve the health and wellbeing of all members of the family. Walking a dog improves an owner's cardiovascular health as well as increasing muscle and bone strength. Regular dog walking also improves social life as people become more connected members of the community. Dog ownership also has psychological benefits, improving mood and mental wellbeing.

"It has been scientifically proven than owning a dog makes people happier and healthier. Life is often so fast paced these days that we forget to get in the exercise required to keep us healthy. Having a dog at home keeps stress levels low, and makes a good excuse to get out there and get active.", suggests veterinarian and **Dogs NSW** spokesperson **Dr Peter Higgins**.

Older children's health can especially benefit from the family dog. They can be a close friend and companion to kids as they grow up. Dogs also encourage an active lifestyle, boosting activity into everyday life, be it wrestling on the floor in front of the TV, or getting them up for the computer to chase each other around the garden or the park. Children don't need to walk dogs for long periods to reap these health benefits.

"Parents shouldn't be afraid of letting their kids play with dogs, so long as adequate steps are taken to ensure their safety. As a general rule, no children under the age of eight should be left unsupervised with any dogs no matter how familiar they. Owners-to-be should also consider their personal situation, and select a suitable breed that will fit into their lifestyle. Labrador Retrievers make a great choice as family pets; they're loyal and friendly, and gentle with kids.", explains **Dr Higgins**.

Dogs NSW recommends the following tips for dog walking:

- Aim to walk regularly, around 30 minutes, four or five times a week
- Take a plastic bag to clean up dog poo
- Make sure your dog has been desexed
- Add an ID tag with your phone number to your dogs collar
- Make sure your dog is micro-chipped and registration with local council up to date
- Always walk your dog on a leash

People who walk their dogs around their local neighbourhood become more sociable members of the community, greeting people as they walk past, and getting to know other dog owners who exercise themselves and their dogs in local parks. "When owners know more people and feel more connected to their community, they are going to feel far happier.", believes **Dr Higgins**.

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