

Pet animals

Pets can provide companionship and support health and wellness in a variety of ways.

Choose an animal based on your lifestyle and the animal's needs. You must care for it throughout its life. They are living beings and suffer and feel pain and emotions. Remember that it is a responsibility and that it is subject to legislation. [Follow the regulations on pet ownership.](#)

Benefits of having a pet

Improves social skills: pets make us feel less lonely and more protected. They increase the feeling of social support. They help children with their emotional and social skills and promote their sense of responsibility. For children with autism spectrum disorders or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, interaction with animals (e.g., rabbits) is positive.

Improves our physical health: interaction with animals reduces cortisol levels (a hormone related to stress) and lowers blood pressure. Walking a dog provides half of the recommended daily exercise, prevents obesity, and protects against cardiovascular disease (hypertension), metabolic disorders (diabetes), and emotional disorders (anxiety or depression).

Improves mood: petting, playing, or walking with a pet relaxes us and improves our mood. Watching fish swim can provide a sense of calm. Animals can be a source of comfort and support, especially therapy dogs, which help, for example, to reduce anxiety and control pain in cancer and terminal illnesses.

Other benefits: guide dogs help blind people to move around freely. Horses are used in therapy for drug addiction or chronic conditions, such as fibromyalgia, with good results.

What should be taken into account?

Allergies: if anyone in the family suffers from asthma, allergic rhinoconjunctivitis, or allergic dermatitis, avoid having animals with fur in the home and thoroughly clean the home to remove hair. Do the same if anyone suffers from chronic bronchitis. If allergy or asthma symptoms worsen, consult your doctor to adjust treatment.

You can seek veterinary advice on species that do not cause allergies.

Falls, accidents, injuries: make sure that the animal does not cause anyone to fall, either at home or outside. In the event of a scratch or bite, wash the wound with soap and water and disinfect it. If it becomes infected or the injury is serious, seek medical advice.

Infections: it is recommended to wash your hands after touching animals and to keep your pet clean, in good health, and up to date with vaccinations and preventive treatments.

Animals should be kept well dewormed and fleas and ticks should be prevented to avoid the transmission of infections. Take precautions against insect bites when walking outdoors. If someone is bitten by a tick, remove it carefully and disinfect the bite. If fever or spots appear a few days later, seek medical advice.

Children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems are at greater risk of contracting diseases transmitted by animals and should take extra care.

During pregnancy, avoid handling litter boxes with cat feces (due to the risk of toxoplasmosis or parasitosis).

Heatstroke in people and animals: avoid walking during the hottest hours of the day, bring water for both you and your pet, and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.

