

Dedicated dog owners walk more than others

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A University of Victoria study suggests dedicated dog owners log more exercise time than their urban neighbors without pet dogs.

"There's this extra dog obligation that helps get people up and out for their exercise," said author Shane Brown, a physical education instructor and researcher at the British Columbia university.

Brown and co-author Ryan Rhodes surveyed 177 men and 174 women between ages 20 and 80 in Greater Victoria and found the 70 dog owners walked an average of 300 minutes a week, compared with 168 minutes a week for the others.

However, other than walking, dog owners exercised less than non-owners.

"A feeling of obligation to the dog explained 11 percent of the variance of getting out there and actually doing the behavior," Brown said.

Despite the study results, Brown says adopting a pet purely as exercise motivation isn't recommended.

"We're definitely not saying, 'Everyone go out and get a dog,' she said. "We are saying that for those of us who have dogs or those who are thinking of getting a dog, this is an added benefit."

The research appears in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

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