

How accurate are dog-activity trackers?

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

There are countless gadgets available these days for people to track everything from our heart rate to our stress levels. So perhaps it's no surprise that there also are quite a few products that now claim to similarly monitor your dog's activity and health, including tracking what your pet is up to all day at home while you're at work.

Because [dogs](#) don't walk upright, canine accelerometers require a different approach to motion-sensing than products devised for humans—ones that take into account both up-and-down motion and sideways movement. Some dog-activity trackers just measure the equivalent of your pet's steps per day, while others also will track behaviors, such as how often your pet sleeps or scratches itself. Some products allow your veterinarian to view your pet's activity, which may be helpful in monitoring conditions such as skin problems. Some units have GPS tracking, which could help you locate your pet if it ever gets lost.

When it comes to figuring out what the data produced by these these devices really says about your pet's activity and [overall health](#), there is one large study currently getting underway: the [Pet Insight Project](#), which is sponsored by the company behind one of the trackers, the Whistle FIT, and seeks to enroll thousands of animals. There also are smaller published studies of assorted canine-activity trackers, but other devices have not been validated by any published [clinical trials](#). And there's always more work to be done to make sure a tracker works for every type and shape of dog.

If you're considering buying a wearable health device for your dog, look for a product that provides the information you want, has research confirming its accuracy, comes with technical support, and can withstand your pet's lifestyle—for example, a waterproof device if your Labrador retriever burns calories swimming. (Some features may require a subscription fee on top of the cost of the device, so be sure to figure all the costs into your decision.) To confirm that the product you're interested in has been validated by a clinical study, call the company making it or check its website for this information, or see what studies show up when you search the device's name on [Google Scholar](#).

We also lack good study data when it comes to what's a good goal for

how much to exercise your dog. However, the [American Animal Hospital Association Weight Management Guidelines](#) recommend forty-five minutes a day as the magic number. If your dog is overweight, start off with five minutes of walking a day, increasing the length of your walks as your pet's fitness improves.

Provided by Tufts University

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