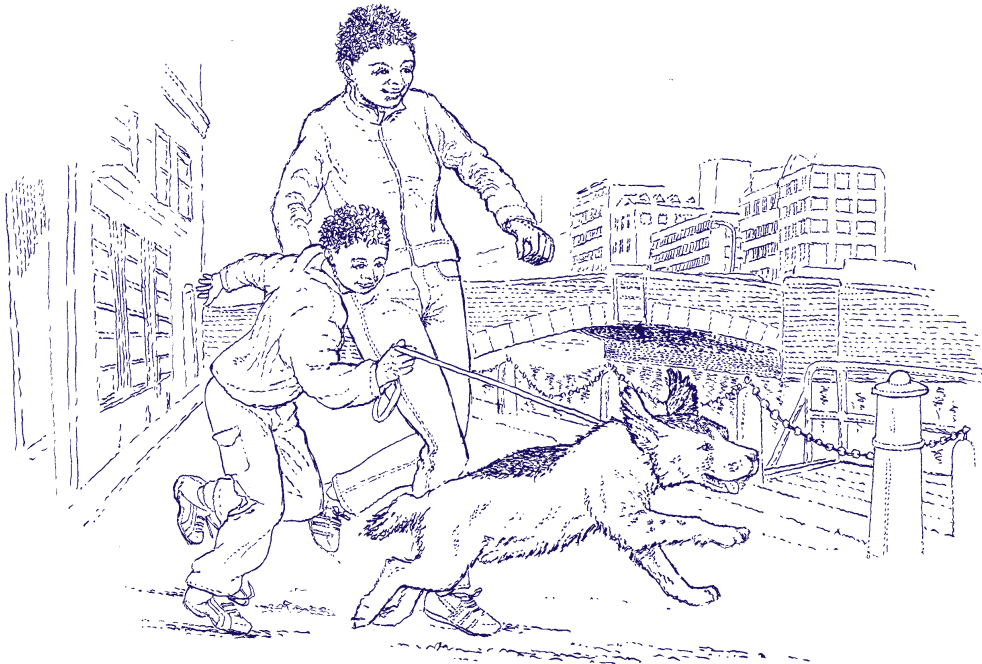


# Dogs are good for you!



The dogs that we now keep as pets are the descendants of wolves that entered villages in search of food about 12 000 years ago. Later, people began to use dogs to guard, herd and hunt. In the twenty-first century, as this article describes, dogs can bring us other benefits.



Owning a dog is good for your mental and physical health, more so even than cats, researchers claim today.

Dr Deborah Wells, a senior lecturer at the Canine Behaviour Centre of Queens University, Belfast, found that dog owners have lower cholesterol and blood pressure, fewer minor physical ailments, and are less likely to develop serious medical problems.

In a paper published today by the British Psychological Society, she said, "It is possible that dogs can directly promote our well being by buffering us from stress, one of the major risk factors associated with ill health. The ownership of a dog can also lead to increases in physical activity and facilitate the development of social contact, which may enhance both physiological and psychological human health in a more indirect manner."

She found that people who took cats and dogs from animal rescue shelters noticed a decrease in minor ailments such as headaches, colds and dizziness a month after the rescue visit. But only dog owners maintained the improvements ten months later – cat owners did not.

The research, published in the *Health Psychology Journal*, found that dogs could also act as 'early-warning systems' for more serious illnesses including cancer and epilepsy.

From 'Improve your health, become a dog owner' by Lynne Wallis  
*Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 2007