

HEALTH

Human-Animal Interactions: Therapeutic and Surprising

In a recent article the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had some interesting things to say about the possible therapeutic effects of having a pet. Following is part of that article:

Companion animals—the dogs, cats, birds, and other pets that share our homes and our lives—significantly affect our health and well-being. In fact, an important part of NICHD's research portfolio is the study of how these human-animal interactions influence child health and behavior, and impact our overall quality of life.

For the past 10 years, NICHD's Child Development and Behavior Branch has had a partnership with the WALTHAM® Centre External Web Site Policy for Pet Nutrition, a division of Mars, Inc., to research the impact of animal interactions on child health and development. This partnership has led to several published works describing the therapeutic benefits of our companion animals.

In a 2015 NICHD-funded study, a group of adolescents with type 1 diabetes each cared for a pet fish twice a day by feeding and checking water levels. The routine also included changing tank water each week, coupled with the children reviewing their glucose logs with parents. The researchers found that, when compared to teens who hadn't been given a fish to care for, the fishkeeping teens were more disciplined about checking their own blood glucose levels, which is essential for maintaining their health. Kids ages 10 to 13 years showed the greatest increase in self-monitoring following the pet fish intervention.

That same year, another study found that children with autism spectrum disorder were calmer while playing with guinea pigs. Researchers gave each child a wristband that measured skin conductance—a measure for excitement and anxiety. A device inside the wristband sends an imperceptible electric current through the skin. The more anxious a person feels, the faster the current will travel through the skin. When the children with autism spent 10 minutes in a supervised group playtime with guinea pigs, their anxiety levels dropped. The children with autism also showed improved social functioning and were more engaged with their peers—an important benefit for children with autism. The researchers speculated that, because the animals offered unqualified



LEE HILLIARD

acceptance, their presence comforted and calmed the children.

Finally, dogs may prove to be an important addition to help kids cope with attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Another NICHD study enrolled two groups of children diagnosed with ADHD into a 12-week group therapy session. One group of kids read to a therapy dog once a week for 30 minutes, while the other group read to puppets that looked like dogs. Both groups showed improvements from the therapy sessions. However, the kids who read to the real animals performed better in measures of social skills, prosocial behaviors (such as sharing, cooperation, and volunteering), and behavioral problems. The researchers theorized that these interactions with dogs may help children focus their attention, thus improving their executive-functioning skills.

For a link to this and other articles relating to the power of human pet interaction, go to our website www.chcneo.com/education and click on the pets icon.

Locally, Community Health Center of Northeast Oklahoma, Inc., dba Afton, Grove and Welch Community Health Centers, continue to serve the area with the finest in personalized health care. For details or to schedule an appointment contact (918) 257-8029, (918) 801-7504 or (918) 788-3918 or check us out on the web at www.chcneo.com, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter. A sliding payment scale is available for patients based on family size and income. *Lee Hilliard, D.Min., Th.D., FIC, is the Outreach Specialist at the Community Health Center of Northeast Oklahoma. Follow him on Twitter @chcneo, Instagram @Community Health Center NEOK and Facebook at Community Health Center of Northeast Oklahoma, Inc. Email to lhilliard@chcneo.org or direct cell 918-219-4486.*

Volunteer for Your Own Health

One of the strongest threads woven into the fabric of American culture is that of volunteer service. When someone is in need, we ask what can be done to help. There are numerous reasons that prevent us from volunteering, but for Ottawa County lack of opportunity, and age, are not among them.

Ottawa seniors have been making a powerful impact in the community, using a lifetime of skills and experience. Even after decades of hard work, they are willing to take on new roles after retirement — organizing, educating, and innovating, to help others. It is a commitment that shines brightly. Seldom is this better demonstrated than in the program known as the The C.O.R. Senior Companion Program.

The C.O.R. Senior Companion Program pairs trained volunteers (companions) with less mobile seniors who have difficulty with daily living tasks. Through assistance and friendship, they help others live independently in their



SEAN BRIDGES

homes rather than having to move to more expensive or institutional care.

Senior Companions assists clients with simple activities of daily living, grocery shopping, transportation, and friendly companionship. They also provide clients with contact to the outside world, help make the lives of the people they serve less lonely, and offer free respite time for caregivers.

Want to get involved? Anyone who is 55 years old, and meets income eligibility requirements can be a Senior Companion. Medical or technical skills are not needed. In exchange for service, Senior Companions receive a modest tax-free

stipend, reimbursement for transportation and other benefits. The Senior Companion Program is offered in Craig, Ottawa and Rogers Counties.

Who can be a client and receive Senior Companion services? Any resident of Ottawa, Craig, or Rogers Counties, over age 60 who needs weekly assistance, can receive free Senior Companion Services.

While volunteer activities may be performed with the core intention of helping others, there is common wisdom, and now research, indicating those who give of themselves also receive. When you volunteer, you're not just helping others—you're helping yourself.

A growing body of research points to the mental and physical health benefits associated with volunteering, including lower mortality rates, increased strength and energy, decreased rates of depression, and fewer physical limitations. Given the sheer size of America's older population, the relationship between volunteering and health might

deserve a high degree of attention.

Volunteering can help older adults overcome life events that affect self-esteem and socialization, such as retirement, loss of spouse, health problems, and empty-nest syndrome. The role of helping others increasingly provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life. It helps us continue to feel connected and valued, facilitates new discoveries and friends.

As our nation's older population rapidly grows, there is a tremendous opportunity and need, to unleash the power of volunteers on our community's most pressing issues. Why not improve your own, and someone else's quality of life, by taking advantage of volunteering. Senior Companions can help you accomplish both.

For more information on Senior Companions, contact Judy Pettit at the Ottawa County Health Department, 918-540-2481.

Sean Bridges is Health Educator for the Delaware and Ottawa County Health Departments.

5 sometimes unexpected symptoms during pregnancy

BrandPoint
news@miaminewsrecord.com

Pregnancy is an exciting time in a woman's life, filled with countless physical, emotional and lifestyle changes. Pregnant women often do research, read books or consult friends and family to determine what to expect during those nine months and how to best combat the symptoms that may arise. While issues like morning sickness and cravings are to be expected, there are several uncomfortable, but common, effects soon-to-be moms may be less likely to anticipate.

"A woman is going to experience numerous changes to her body during pregnancy," says Dr. Alyssa Dweck, an OB-GYN, author and expert on women's health. "Although there is abundant information about issues like backaches and morning sickness, there are a number of common symptoms women are less inclined to talk about because they either consider them taboo or embarrassing."

While each woman's pregnancy experience will be unique, Dr. Dweck shares some of the lesser-known, but common, health nuisances to expect when expecting:

1. Constipation
Some common causes of constipation among pregnant women include increased progesterone levels, which influences intestinal motility, increased pressure from the growing uterus and the recommended supplementation of iron. To help diminish constipation, women can try increasing their fiber and



BRANDPOINT

While issues like morning sickness and cravings are to be expected, there are several uncomfortable, but common, effects soon-to-be moms may be less likely to anticipate.

fluid intake and limit iron supplements to three times a week.

2. Yeast infections
The hormonal changes that come with pregnancy often increase the chance of developing a vaginal yeast infection. However, according to a 2016 Danish nationwide cohort study, even a single, low dose of fluconazole (the leading prescription pill to treat yeast infections) may increase miscarriage risk. Instead, Dr. Dweck recommends over-the-counter treatments for vaginal yeast infections. Nevertheless, women should always check with their own healthcare provider before using any treatment during pregnancy.

3. Heartburn
Heartburn and indigestion are most frequent during the third trimester,

as the growing uterus places pressure on the stomach and the muscle tone of the esophagus relaxes. To help minimize heartburn, eat smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day, sit or stand after a meal and avoid spicy, greasy and fatty foods. OTC antacids are typically safe, but it is important to speak to an OB-GYN before taking.

4. Varicose veins
Many women develop varicose veins during pregnancy. As blood volume increases and the uterus enlarges, additional pressure is put on the veins in the pelvis, lower extremities and the rectal area. Elevate the legs to improve circulation, avoid sitting or standing in the same position for extended lengths of time and try to exercise regularly, if possible.

5. Body and facial hair growth

Hair is likely to grow faster and thicker during pregnancy on places other than just the head. Higher levels of estrogen extend the growth phase of hair, leading to less shedding and denser locks. Safe ways to get rid of these unwanted hairs during pregnancy include tweezing, waxing and shaving.

Regardless of whether a result of pregnancy is considered normal, pregnant women should readily consult their OB-GYN if they experience any changes or if they are looking for treatment solutions. Though health nuisances are bound to pop up during pregnancy, there are simple solutions to combat them so women can make the most of this wonderful time and prep for the arrival of baby.

B & B MIAMI CINEPLEX

FIFTY SHADES FREED (R)
4:15, 7:15

PETER RABBIT (PG)
5:10, 7:30

THE 15:17 TO PARIS (R)
5:40, 8:00

THE GREATEST SHOWMAN (PG)
5:10, 8:00

www.miamicineplex.com
22 North Main • Miami, OK
(918) 542-SHOW (7469)
Stadium seating • arcade • party room
Shows before 5:30 discounted

HHEATING pads and electric blankets cause nearly 500 fires each year. Most of these fires involve products more than ten years old.

Inspect these appliances often. Check for dark spots on the fabric or frayed electric cords.

Do not cover, fold or tuck in an electric blanket or heating pad when in use. This may cause them to overheat and cause a fire.

Heating appliances should never be left unattended or used while sleeping.

REC/NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
www.neelectric.com

