

HEALTH NEWS

Shedding Pounds With Your Pet

(NAPSA)—Have you got a pudgy pooch? Is your kitty a little too fat of a cat? If the answer is “yes,” it’s important to help your furry friend lighten his load—and you may want to watch your weight while you’re at it.

Doctors say over 60 percent of American adults are overweight and 50 percent of the pet population is too. Is there a connection between overweight pet owners and heavy-set pets? Experts say there may be.

“From what I’ve seen, if you have a lifestyle conducive to being overweight, chances are your dog or cat does too,” says Dr. Jennifer Jellison, DVM of Minerva Park Veterinary Clinic, Columbus, Ohio. “People should know the Surgeon General’s warning about the risks of being overweight applies whether you’ve got two legs or four.”

To help combat this weighty issue, the Wellness Institute and Hills, the company that makes Science Diet pet food, launched People and Pets Exercising Together (PPET). The initiative is a weight-management program for both pets and pet owners. The program recommends people dine with their pets, exercise with them and hit the scales at weigh-ins together. The program is based on the belief that it’s easier for people to lose weight when they have a diet and exercise partner.

“There’s a lot of clinical evidence that suggests people are more effective at losing weight and maintaining that weight loss when they do it with a friend or companion,” says Dr. Robert Kushner, director of the Wellness Institute, Northwestern Memorial Hospital.



Both you and your faithful companion can benefit from exercising together.

PPET recommends these tips for getting in shape with your pet:

- **Make Exercise Fun**—In addition to daily walks, keep pets active by playing fetching games with dogs or buying “hunting toys” for cats.
- **Don’t Force It**—If your pooch is frightened of running next to your bicycle, don’t make him. Find an activity you both can enjoy.
- **Balance Your “Food Checkbook”**—Monitor your weight and your pet’s weight regularly. The results can be encouraging.
- **Work Your Way Up**—Human and pet athletes need gradual conditioning to slowly strengthen joints, muscles and footpads.
- **Set A Pace**—Go at a pace you both can enjoy. Remember, if Fido shows signs of fatigue, slow down.

For more information visit www.petfit.com.