

The Impact of Dog Walking on Leisure-Time Physical Activity: Results From a Population-Based Survey of Michigan Adults

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Background: The extent to which dog walking promotes leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) remains unresolved. We describe the characteristics of people who walk their dog, and assess the impact on LTPA. **Methods:** Information on dog ownership, dog walking patterns, total walking activity and LTPA were assessed in the 2005 Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey. Multiple logistic regression was used to generate adjusted odds ratios (AOR) for the effect of dog walking on total walking and LTPA. **Results:** Of 5,902 respondents 41% owned a dog, and of these, 61% walked their dog for at least 10 minutes at a time. However, only 27% walked their dog at least 150 minutes per week. Dog walking was associated with a significant increase in walking activity and LTPA. Compared to non-dog owners, the odds of obtaining at least 150 minutes per week of total walking were 34% higher for dog walkers (AOR= 1.34, 95% CI = 1.13-1.59), and the odds of doing any LTPA were 69% higher (AOR= 1.69, 95% CI = 1.33-2.15). **Conclusions:** Dog walking was associated with more walking and LTPA, however a substantial proportion of dog owners do not walk their dog. The promotion of dog walking could help increase LTPA.

Keywords: physical activity, dog ownership, public health, walking behavior

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