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## Dogs lead way for healthy kids

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Having a pet dog in the family leads to more active kids, which in turn reduces their risk of chronic disease, new research has found.



An Australian-first study followed 600 children aged 2-7 over three years to chart the impact of dog ownership and the loss of a pet dog on physical activity.

It comes after News Corp launched the Health of the Nation campaign to inspire Australians to get moving to avoid a looming health crisis.

A survey of more than 3000 people for the campaign found one in four parents never threw or kicked a ball with their children and only half took their kids outdoors to play 1-3 hours a week.

Researchers from the Telethon Kids Institute, University of WA and University of Queensland found kids' activity levels increased with the addition of a dog in the family, especially in girls.

"We saw a significant jump in daily physical activity in children whose families acquired a dog over the study period, while those whose families experienced the loss of a dog recorded a steep drop-off," lead researcher Emma Adams said.

"The results were particularly noticeable in girls, with girls who acquired a dog increasing their light intensity activity and games by almost an hour a day (52 minutes).

"On the flip side, there was a marked drop in light intensity activity and games in girls who experienced the loss of a dog.

"What these results show is that dog ownership can have a positive influence on children's physical activity and that we start to see those benefits from early childhood."