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*** Video and photos available for download: <http://bit.ly/34gkEkl>.***

OHIO STATE EXPERTS: PARTNER WITH YOUR PET TO SUCCEED WITH DIET AND EXERCISE PLANS

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Less than 25% of people who start a diet and exercise plan stick with their resolutions for more than a month. Experts at [The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center](#) and [The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center](#) say that partnering with your pet when implementing healthy habits can be a great way to find motivation and make you both happier and healthier.

“A balanced diet and regular exercise are extremely important for pets, just like they are for humans, and many of the health benefits of a healthy lifestyle are the same” said Dr. Arielle Markley, a veterinarian in the [Canine Physical Rehabilitation & Sports Medicine Center](#) at Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center.

Markley acknowledges that there are many creative ways to get active with your pet such as dog yoga, dog Pilates, and couch to 5K programs, but she urges people to start slowly. Just as someone shouldn't run a full marathon without training, the same holds true for pets. It's important to work them up slowly, especially if they haven't been active.

When starting a diet and exercise plan with your pet, Markley says to remember **PAWS**:

- **Plan** – Schedule your workouts, make grocery lists and plan out the daily practices that are going to help you reach your goals. Making small, manageable changes will lead to big results over time.
- **Active** – Find ways to get active with your pet that you both enjoy.
- **Wellness** – Checkups are important for both you and your pet to ensure you are both healthy enough for exercise and to determine your specific dietary needs. When you call your vet to schedule your pet's annual checkup, give your primary care physician a call as well.
- **Success** – Celebrate and reward your success, but try swapping out treats and junk food for some extra love and attention for your pet.

[Liz Weinandy](#), a registered dietitian at Ohio State Wexner Medical Center, acknowledges that change can be hard but says forming a partnership with your pet could be the motivation you need.

“Making a commitment to your pet to go for a walk every single day means that you're not only making those changes for yourself, but now also for your pet. We know that the numerous health benefits from embracing a healthier lifestyle like weight loss, better sleep, and overall enhanced mental health, can translate to your pet as well,” Weinandy said.

Both experts stress the importance of getting clearance from your doctor and veterinarian before starting any diet and exercise program. It's important to make sure that there aren't any other health conditions that might keep either of you from your goals and to have a plan that is tailored to your individual needs.

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