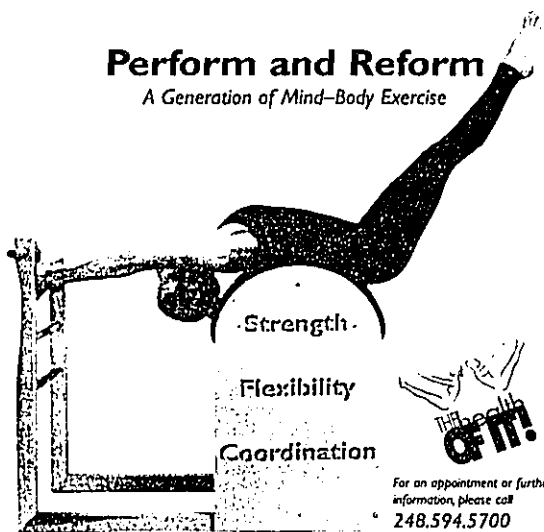


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**Weight Loss:**  
Novi Park: Providence Medical  
Center-Providence Park  
Saturday, June 3rd, 1:00 - 3:00 pm  
47601 Grand River Avenue  
(Beck Road entrance), Novi.

**Weight Loss:**  
Southfield:  
Providence Hospital  
Saturday, June 10th, 1:00-3:00pm  
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Rena Greenberg, Director  
Wellness Seminars, 800-848-2822

## Run, Rover, run Keep four-legged friends fit

BY ANNE FARRIS  
SPECIAL WRITER

Spring is usually the time when we start thinking about getting back into shape. It's the perfect time to pick up the pace of that tired old exercise routine, and with the mild weather we've been having lately, there's almost no excuse for not getting out there.

There's no excuse for your dog not getting exercise either. The next time you head out for a little fresh air, grab a leash and bring your buddy with you. He's the perfect exercise companion, and he'll thank you for it later.

Our canine friends benefit from physical exercise in exactly the same ways that we do. Movement helps animals stay healthy and maintain good muscle tone. It's also a crucial component in controlling obesity.

What's interesting to note is that dogs who get regular exercise are generally happier and exhibit fewer behavioral problems, such as destructiveness, than their sedentary counterparts — especially in breeds prone to those problems.

Dr. Matt Monica, DVM at Oakland Animal Hospital in Rochester, says that Weimaraners and other high-intensity breeds require more exercise than other breeds. "They're like a coiled spring. If they don't get that energy release several times a day they can develop anxieties which could potentially lead to all kinds of behavior difficulties," he says.

The age of your dog must be taken into account when embarking on an exercise routine. Starting too early can cause injury to a young dog's developing bones.

As a rule of thumb, dogs weighing 45 to 95 lbs at maturity should begin consistent, high-level running or walking after the age of a year. Giant breeds weighing over 100 lbs should wait until 18 months or older. Small breeds weighing under 25 lbs should wait until 8 months of age.

Dr. Monica says it's wise to have your dog examined by a veterinarian before you get started. "There are certain conditions, such as hip dysplasia, that might prevent a dog from running, but overall, exercise is good for most dogs."

If running or walking is not an option for you, there are still ways to ensure that your dog gets the exercise he needs. If you have a fenced-in area, Dr. Monica suggests a daily game of fetch. "It's good for them and reinforces what they're born to do."

Dogs love water. If you have access to a lake, he'll enjoy the swim and stay cool at the same time. Like running and fetching, swimming comes naturally to most dogs.

If you do plan on running with your dog, the following common sense rules will apply to both of you:

- Start on a moderate program of walking 10 - 15 minutes once or twice per day.

- In warm weather, head out early in the morning or late in the evening when



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACKFIELD

**Fetching Frisbees:** While dogs, including our cover dog Bartleby, enjoy a game of Frisbee, getting your cat to exercise takes a lot more creativity.

the sun is less intense and temperature has cooled.

- Bring drinking water for both of you, or make sure you go by places where there is water.

- Pay attention to the surface that you're traveling on. Asphalt and concrete are hard surfaces that can cause damage to the pads of a dog's feet. They also become very hot in the summer. Dirt and grass are better for your dog.

- Be sure to travel against traffic when running in the street and keep your dog on the inside next to the curb.

- When running at night, wear reflective clothing and attach illuminated strips to your dog's collar.

- Pay attention to your dog's pace and breathing. If he seems tired, slow down.

### Cats

Indoor cats also benefit from regular exercise, but getting that fat cat moving isn't going to be easy.

"Cats present one of the most difficult challenges of veterinary medicine," says Dr. Monica, who points out that cats aren't particularly fond of playing Frisbee or long walks on a leash. "Cats are prone to obesity, which predisposes them to arthritis. That's why it's important to get them interested in toys which stimulate them, both physically and mentally, and to make sure you don't over feed them."

With a few common household items and a little creativity on your part, you can exercise your cat (and entertain yourself) for hours on end. Flashlights (for flashlight tag), crumpled paper balls, paper bags, cardboard boxes, socks and string are all toys to your cat.

Just be sure to avoid small objects that can be swallowed or choked on, or those with loose or sharp objects. Experts say that you can tell if your cat is enjoying a game by checking his pupils. If they're dilated, he likes it.

One last bit of advice: Schedule routine check-ups with your vet and stay up-to-date on vaccinations. It's the best way to keep your pet healthy.