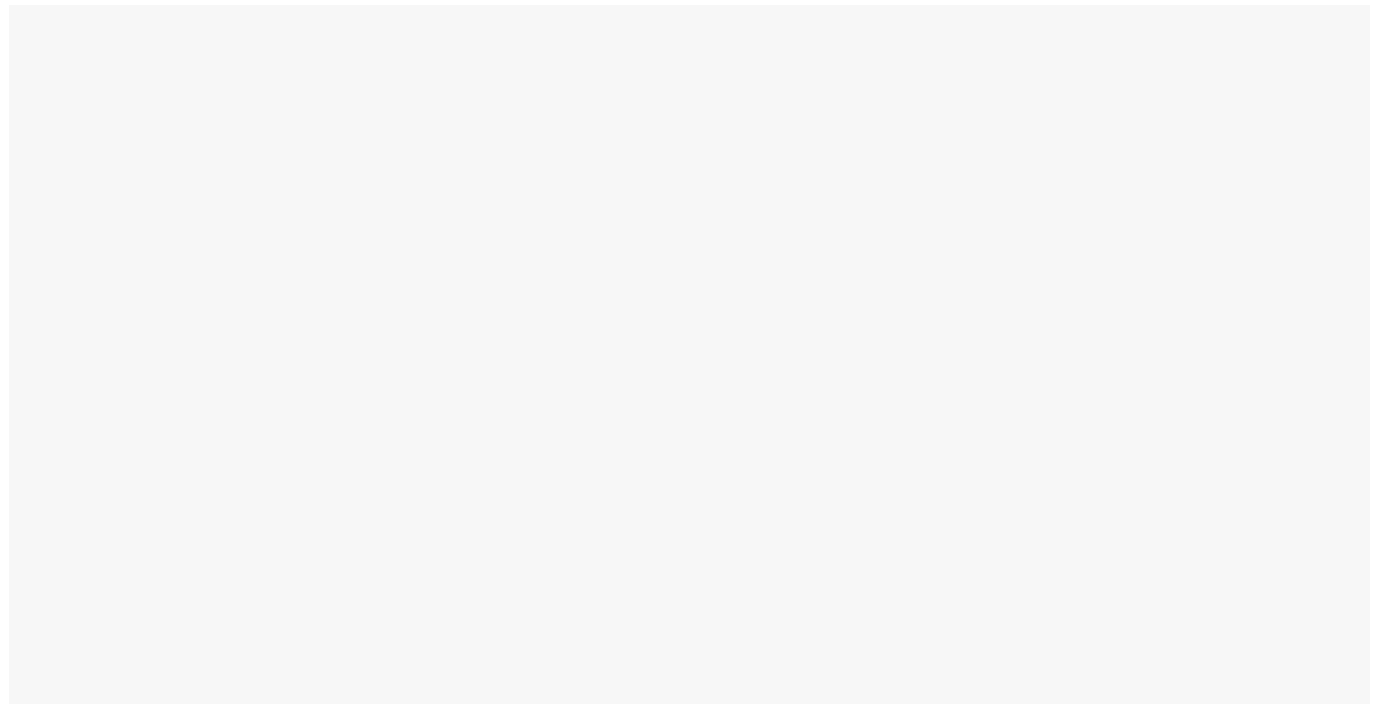


Home Health

## Elderly people, 'adopt a puppy', 3 billion savings in health spending with pets

**R** by [Ruetir](#) September 29, 2023 in [Health](#)

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In Italy there are 14.5 million people over 65. Among them, 20% are diabetic and 54% are hypertensive. Many, also due to loneliness, suffer from depression. Changing lifestyles, in particular moderate daily physical exercise, such as walking a dog, could significantly improve their health conditions, with positive effects also on the national health system. In fact, a study by the Sic-Sanità Study Center revealed that it would be possible to save as much as 3 billion euros on healthcare spending if all elderly people had a pet. The campaign, launched on the eve of Grandparents' Day – scheduled for 2 October – 'Adopt a puppy, find your health', also starts from these data, with the aim of carrying out 10 thousand adoptions in 6 months.

The initiative, presented this morning in Rome by the promoters Senior Italia Federanziani, VitaAttiva and the Italian sports association (Asi), is supported by the National Federation of Medical Associations (Fnomceo), by the National Association of Italian veterinary doctors (Anmvi), by the Italian Federation of general practitioners (Fimmg), by the Italian Arterial Hypertension Society, by the Italian Association for the defense of the interests of diabetics (Aid). "Choosing the company of a pet also means a lot for less self-sufficient elderly people," Alessandra Locatelli, minister for Disabilities, said in a video message. "Often – he added – advanced age imposes physical limits which can be resolved with the help of a pet, as in the cases of guide dogs for people with visual difficulties. They greatly expand the possibilities of relating with the outside world, they help in carrying out daily and domestic activities, reduce loneliness. Adoption must be seriously considered, with the support of family members".

"The 'Adopt a puppy, find your health' campaign that we are launching today – explained Roberto Messina, Senior President Italia FederAnziani – is the evolution of an initiative that gave us great satisfaction in 2019. We are repeating it because the profit is for everyone: people would be better off, dogs and cats would find a home, state and municipal coffers would save on the management of animals stored in facilities, so as to be able to invest more in welfare. We will distribute posters in senior centers to also encourage family members and caregivers to take this possibility into consideration. On our website, on that of Asi Italian Sports Association and of Vitattiva there is a list of kennels and catteries that you can contact. The objective is to obtain in 6 months, from October to March, the 'adoption of 10 thousand animals. We will then continue with increasingly ambitious objectives."

## Monsignor Paglia, 'eating healthily and exercising reduces cancer risks by 40%'

"Eating healthily and exercising – underlines Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life and honorary president of Senior FederAnziani – reduces the risk of developing a neoplasm by 40% and is especially important for those suffering from diabetes and hypertension, like many elderly people. A little daily exercise improves blood pressure and cholesterol levels and has effects on anxiety and stress. Taking a dog out for daily walks, for example, not only allows you to walk enough to stay healthy, but also to socialize with other people, be in company, feel better emotionally and combat the risk of depression".

"In clinical practice we meet many over 65s with animals", recalls Raimondo Colangeli, vice president of the National Association of Italian Veterinary Doctors (Anmvi). "Adopting a pet means removing it from shelters, guaranteeing it a better life too. In addition to physical well-being, taking care of a puppy also guarantees a psychological benefit, because the elderly person returns to having responsibilities towards someone who depends on them and must resume times and routines: wake-up calls, outings in the case of a dog, meals".

"The cat, although it does not require walking outside the house – adds Colangeli – however needs care, food and playful entertainment. The veterinarian becomes the leading figure to help in choosing the right species and breed depending on the characteristics of the person. pre-

adoption visits carried out free of charge in the studios are important elements. To encourage those who live only on a pension to get an animal it would also be important to be able to guarantee reductions or deductions in VAT for medical care and food purchases. It is a request that we as Anmvi have been making for years ago, with the collection of more than 100 thousand signatures. Senior Italia FederAnziani asks the same thing for people with hypertension or diabetes: we hope that our requests will be accepted".