

5 easy ways



Good news! New Australian research finds that bad moods aren't all bad: They actually make you temporarily smarter, better at decisionmaking and more attentive to detail! But good moods are just as helpful: They promote creativity, flexibility and cooperation—and, well, who wants to be in a bad mood anyway? Thanks to the latest findings in happiness research, you don't have to be!

Unwind in minutes with a pet! Spending time with

a furry friend sends your spirits soaring! In fact, State University of New York at Buffalo researchers found that stressed-out stockbrokers who adopted a cat or dog experienced less anxiety and saw a steeper drop in blood pressure compared to their petless peers. Why it works: "Pets are one

- of the most effective mood-boosters around," says lead study author Karen Allen, Ph.D. "They ward off loneliness, love us without judgment-and slash our levels of the stress hormone cortisol." Plus, they boost production of the good-mood brain chemicals prolactin and oxytocin.
- Bliss-boosting Rx: Enjoy 10 minutes of cuddle time daily.

More ways pets perk you up!

Dogs help you . . .

Make friends! Researchers found that people who walk their dogs meet lots of new people!

Lose weight! Dog walkers lose about 14 pounds a year—and anyone who has ever dieted knows how much of a mood boost that can be!

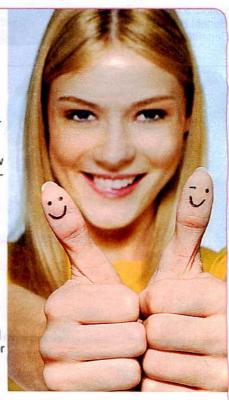
Cats help you . . . Heal faster! A study found that nursing homes that allowed cats as pets had lower medication costs than those that didn't!

Cat owners get an immunity boost that makes them less likely to suffer from

1 Flood your body with happiness hormones!

It's been called a "magic vitamin," and for good reason: It lowers your risk of many diseases, and folic acid has now been proven to increase happiness in women by 50%, report researchers from Britain's University of York.

- Why it works: It boosts production of dopamine, a pleasure-boosting brain chemical, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of From Fatigued to Fantastic.
- Bliss-boosting Rx: Take 400 mcg. of folic acid daily, suggests Dr. Teitelbaum, and you can expect to feel happier in a week. Or fill up on folicacid-packed foods like lentils, spinach and asparagus.



An act of kindness—say, writing a note of gratitude or dropping off clothes at a shelter—also sends your levels of dopamine soaring, boosting

Thank you'l happiness by as much as 40%!