SENIORS AND ANIMAL CARE

CAREGIVERS

Seniors and Pet Therapy

All About Pets and Seniors

When caregiving for a senior, the thought of caring for a pet as well can be overwhelming. However, pets and pet therapy can offer significant benefits to seniors.

Animal-loving seniors can benefit from having a pet or receiving pet therapy. Although it may present challenges, many believe the benefits outweigh the risks and challenges.

Planning for Senior Pet Care

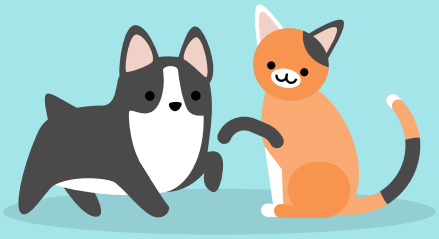
If a senior who is in need of caregiving has a pet or is considering getting a pet, there are many factors that need to be considered. Seniors and their caregivers should ask the following when determining whether to get or keep a pet in this season of life:

- What animal and/or breed is the most low-maintenance and easy-going?
- What assistance will the senior need to care for the pet?
- Could the animal pose a serious threat to senior safety?
- Is it possible for the pet to belong to a loved one and simply visit regularly?
- What happens to the pet if the senior cannot care for it any longer?
- Can this pet live with the senior in a facility if the senior must move?

Many seniors with pets hire caregivers to help groom and exercise animals as well as to transport the animal to the veterinarian.

(Forbes)

Top Pets for Seniors



Dogs

- Poodle
- French Bulldog
- Schipperke
- Maltese
- Pembroke Welsh Corgi

Cats

- Birman
- Ragdoll
- Russian Blue
- British Shorthair
- Persian

(Vet Street; Cat-World)

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Top Tips for Helping Seniors Choose Pets Wisely

- Talk to a vet or a pet adoption specialist to identify an animal that is a good match for a senior
- Choose a pet that weighs under 20 pounds (many pet-friendly senior facilities have weight limits)
- Set up the home so that the pet can access an area to relieve themselves independently
- Choose food and water dishes with automatic dispensing so care is lower-maintenance
- Socialize the pet with friends and loved ones in case the pet needs to move to a new home
- Adopt a pet that is mature and that has already been trained
- Arrange for assistance with pet care in case a senior needs help

(Petful)

Why Pet Therapy is Wise

Some seniors are simply not able to have their own pets. If they are an animal lover, that can be distressing. Pet therapy is a wise alternative to owning a pet. The benefits of pet therapy are diverse, affecting both physical and mental health for the better.

Pet therapy is offered in many senior living communities and facilities. Often, pet therapy groups also visit hospitals and senior centers. Some pet therapists will bring their furry helpers to individual's homes as well.

(A Place for Mom)

Benefits of Pet Interaction for Seniors

Interacting with a pet can help seniors:

- Gain companionship
- Deal with stress
- Use less medication
- Experience lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- Recovery from injury or surgery faster
- Stay active
- Be more sociable
- Avoid depression and loneliness
- Feel comforted and calm

(Caring People Inc)

Home Care Tip

If a pet requires medication, keep their meds far away from a senior's medication. Otherwise, it is easy for seniors to mix up their meds with pet meds, posing a risk to the health of the senior and their pet.

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