

Pet Benefits for Seniors

By Comfort for Critters

As any pet-parent will tell you, when a pet enters your life, it's never the same - and that's a good thing. It's a hard thing to explain, to quantify to someone who has never experienced life with a four-footed friend by your side.

It's not surprising at all that research has illustrated, and yes quantified, the major benefits a person receives from a companion animal. Much of this research has focused on the benefits of pet companionship to the elderly, but they truly apply to us all.

The Pets for the Elderly Foundation lists these 10 benefits to pet companionship:

- Lower blood pressure and pulse
- 21% fewer doctor visits
- Less depression
- Easier to make friends
- More active
- Pets offer affections and unconditional love
- Pets ease the loss of a loved one
- Less loneliness
- Seniors take better care of themselves
- Pets provide a sense of security

One of the researchers even said that "pets are the same as sunshine and vitamins!" A similar study by the American Institute for Preventative Medicine also illustrated some of the benefits of pet companionship. These are especially true, when dealing with depression:

- Gives a person something to care for
- Offers a sense of being wanted and needed
- Offers non-judgmental acceptance
- Decreases feelings of isolation
- Provides a feeling of safety, if living alone

Additional research, by the American Psychological Association, concluded that companion animals provide real benefits to "everyday people." The lead researcher summarizes, "Pet owners had greater self-esteem, were more physically fit, tended to be less lonely, were more conscientious, were more extraverted, tended to be less fearful and tended to be less preoccupied, than non-owners."

And finally, the CDC chimes in to tell us that pets can decrease our blood pressure, cholesterol levels, triglyceride levels and feelings of loneliness. All the while they increase our levels of exercise and socialization. Though for any pet-lover no research is needed, it's a good reminder of why the expense, clean-up and sometimes heartache, is all worth it.

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