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## Good Benefits of Owning a Pet for a Senior - Parent Giving

Now more than ever, more adults are choosing to spend their golden years aging in place. Aging in place can come with many changes; the loss of our independence and quieter social lives leave many aging adults lonely and prone to depression. But, you or your loved one can find comfort and meaning in this new stage of their life by owning a pet.

Research shows that there are numerous benefits to owning a pet as you age in place. Keep reading to learn about these benefits and other pertinent information that will help you decide if owning a pet during your golden years is right for you.

### Physical Health Benefits of Owning A Pet

Owning a pet as you age in place can promote a healthier lifestyle and a general sense of physical well-being.

#### Pets Promote Healthier Lifestyles

Research shows that pet owners engage in healthier lifestyles than those without pets. Dog-owners especially are more likely to take daily walks, contributing to an overall healthier body. Lower blood sugar, lower blood pressure, and better cardiovascular functioning are just a few [senior health benefits](#) of owning a pet. In addition, pet owners are even more likely to engage in healthier diets than others.

#### Pets Help with Pain and Stress

[The National Poll on Healthy Aging](#) has researched the impact of pets on their aging in place owners. A recent study indicates that 79% of aging adults find stress-relief in their pets, and about 34% of elderly pet owners indicate a reduction in pain around their furry friends. Additionally, sleep and inflammation improve with the presence of a pet.

#### Improves Memory

Psychiatrists have researched the impact of owning a pet on memory, and all signs point to their presence being beneficial. Therapy pets are commonplace in psychological treatment centers, but the benefits can extend beyond the therapist's office. Owning a pet improves memory recall, memory retention, and improved mental cognition in the owner.

#### Emotional Benefits of Owning A Pet

Aging in place with a pet by your side can contribute to better emotional health. Individuals suffering from social isolation are 30% more likely to die within the next seven years. But, owning a pet can reduce isolation and the resulting effects it has on aging in place individuals.

#### Reduces Loneliness

Over 40% of aging in place individuals experience loneliness, but they often find solace in their pets. Owners play and talk with their pets. In fact, 57% of pet owners admit to confiding in their pets and finding comfort in doing so.

#### Reduces Isolation

Owning a pet improves sociability and human connection in aging individuals. Recent studies show that 65% of aging in place individuals believe that their pets help them connect with other people. This belief may be because of daily walks and providing a shared connection with other individuals.

#### Provides Focus On the Present

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the thoughts of the future or be consumed by pain and stress. However, owning a pet is proven to help owners focus on the present and reduce their worries about the future.

#### Additional Benefits of Owning A Pet

Aside from emotional and physical benefits, pet owners experience additional benefits by owning their own pet of choice.

#### Pets Provide Security

Owning a pet can provide additional [security for a senior at home](#), especially if the pet is a dog that can alert of burglary or fires. In addition, therapy pets and service animals can provide additional security for seniors at risk of falling.

#### Pets Provide Routine

Having a daily routine contributes to stress reduction and general well-being. Owning a pet requires individuals to operate on a daily routine to care for their pet and give structure to their lives.

#### Pets Provide Purpose



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Having a pet to care for provides individuals with a sense of purpose. Many aging in place seniors find more meaning in their life when someone needs them, and a pet can provide that purpose for them.

### Things To Consider Before Getting A Pet For Your Senior

While owning a pet comes with many benefits for aging in place seniors, there are some essential things to consider before adopting a pet.

#### Physical Demands of Owning A Pet

Owning a pet can be physically demanding, depending on the breed and type of animal. More active individuals can handle caring for a dog. Still, individuals with walking trouble or health problems may want to consider a cat or small dog that can use a litter box or potty pads to avoid the strains of physical activity.

#### Individual Housing Situation

Not all apartments or homes allow residents to have pets. Ensure that whatever pet you choose to adopt is permitted by the rental contract or HOA before you bring the furry friend home. You may need to fill out paperwork or pay pet rent to bring home your pet. Also, keep in mind that certain animals will thrive in smaller spaces, like cats and smaller dogs, but bigger animals like golden retrievers will want more room to romp and play.

#### Costs of Owning A Pet

Owning a pet can rack up some dollars. For example, owning a dog can cost about \$2,000 a year, while a cat or fish may cost as much as \$500. A pet can quickly turn into a real investment between veterinarian visits, shots, food, toys, and pet rent.

#### Disease and Injury Complications

Some pets contribute to illnesses and injuries in individuals. Certain animals, like cats and dogs, can carry parasites or bacteria like e.coli in their saliva or stool that can harm elderly individuals with compromised immune systems. It's important to consider that a bite or scratch from an animal can become infected quickly, too. Additionally, make sure that your senior is not allergic to the type of animal they are interested in before adopting it, as allergies can contribute to breathing problems, headaches, rashes, and more physical problems.

#### Consider Future Home Needs

Before adopting an animal, make sure that you have a contingency plan in place for them. Hospital visits, injuries, and changes in living situations happen, and you should make sure that the pets will be taken care of when the situation arises. If you don't have a support network capable of caring for the pet, owning one may not be the best option for you.

#### Final Things to Consider on Pet Ownership For Aging Adults

As you consider bringing home your own furry, feathered, or gilled friend, consider the benefits of owning a pet and weigh them against the responsibilities and costs they come with. Then, take the time to find the right pet for you by asking local adoption agencies and shelters. With a bit of research and patience, you'll find that owning a pet can provide a sense of meaning and happiness in an uncertain and changing time of an aging in place senior's life.

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