

## Benefits of Dog Therapy

Why are dogs therapeutic? Dogs are accepting, comforting, and non-judgmental.

Dogs Can Improve Physical Health Provide Physical and Occupational Therapy by:

- lowering blood pressure
- improving cardiovascular health
- releasing endorphins that have a calming effect
- diminishing overall physical pain
- increasing physical activity
- producing an automatic relaxation response though the act of petting, which can reduce the amount of medication some people need
- increasing joint movement and improves recovery time
- maintaining or increasing motor skills
- providing motivation to move more, stretch farther, exercise longer
- engaging in activities to target specific movements

Dogs Can Improve Mental Health by:

- lifting spirits and lessens depression
- decreasing feelings of isolation and alienation
- decreasing stress
- increasing focus and attention through hands-on interaction
- increasing self-esteem
- encouraging communication
- enhancing sense of purpose
- providing unconditional love, affection and nurturing
- elevating mood
- providing comfort
- increasing socialization
- reducing boredom
- lowering anxiety
- creating motivation for the patient to recover faster
- reducing loneliness

Other Benefits of Dog Therapy:

- improved communication and social skills
- motivation to stay in treatment and participate fully in therapy

*Information in this handout came from CRC Health Group and Paws for People*