



## FEATURE ARTICLE FROM ALWAYS BEST CARE

# Finding Friendship and Better Health With a Companion Animal

There is a reason they say dogs are man's best friend. Dogs are loving and loyal and they form an unspoken bond with humans. They have a way of reading and responding to human emotion that is comforting. Pets can be wonderful companions for seniors, especially dogs. Though cats, rabbits, hamsters, fish, and other pets can be beneficial as well. Companion animals have been shown to provide a host of [benefits to their owners](#):

***Decreases loneliness and isolation:*** Simply being in the presence of a dog and having them near can help seniors feel less alone. They have someone to talk to and interact with around the clock. Dogs don't judge, are always there to listen, and give endless affection. Taking the dog outside and on walks also gets seniors up and moving around. It can be easier to connect with others with a dog by their side because it is a natural topic of discussion and they're sure to have plenty of stories to share. Dogs can help ease social anxiety and [reduce depression](#).

***Reduces stress and blood pressure:*** The act of petting an animal can be very calming and relaxing. Rhythmically stroking their fur can lower stress levels and has also been shown to reduce blood pressure. For seniors with Alzheimer's disease, having a dog can help reduce agitation.

***Promotes physical exercise:*** Having a dog keeps seniors active. They have to be up and moving around to take it outside, [go on walks](#), and play. Tossing a ball or Frisbee or strolling around the neighborhood can be just as fun for seniors as it is for their dog. Regular exercise and activity also releases endorphins which are natural mood boosters.

***Provides a sense of purpose:*** Caring for a dog or cat can give seniors a sense of purpose and routine for each day. They're not only responsible for themselves, but also for another living being. Their companion animal relies on them for food, water, and grooming each day, but also for interaction and affection. A pet can make seniors feel loved and needed, especially if they're living on their own.

### **Choosing a Companion Animal for your Senior**

Before surprising your senior with a pet, make sure it's something that they want and would enjoy. You also want to ensure that their physical and mental health is well enough that they'll be able to properly care for the animal. Think carefully about what animal you choose. While puppies are adorable and fun, they also tend to be high energy and a lot of work. Your senior might do better with an older dog that is already housebroken and a little calmer.

There are many senior shelter animals just waiting to be adopted and loved, and they can be a good fit for your senior as a companion animal. An in-home caregiver can assist your senior with other tasks around the home and ensure that both they and their pet are doing well. A caregiver can also go along on walks and help your senior create a shopping list with essentials for them and their dog.

*Learn more about how senior care services can provide your loved one with the level of support they need to continue living more safely and independently as they age in place. Always Best Care offers wonderful companionship and care that can give you peace of mind. Contact [Always Best Care](#) at 1-855-470-CARE (2273) to learn how to receive your FREE consultation.*