

## **Pet Therapy and Dogs**

Pet therapy is a broad term that includes animal-assisted therapy and other animal-assisted activities. This type of therapy is a growing field that uses dogs or other animals to help people recover from or better cope with health problems, such as heart disease, cancer and mental health disorders.

Animal-assisted therapy can significantly reduce pain, anxiety, depression and fatigue in people with a range of health problems:

- Children having dental procedures
- People receiving cancer treatment
- People in long-term care facilities
- People with cardiovascular diseases
- People with dementia
- Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder
- People with anxiety

It's not only people with health problems who reap the benefits. Family members and friends who sit in on animal visits say they feel better, too.

## **Dogs and Your Longevity**

A new scientific review, which encompasses 70 years of research surrounding the health benefits of dog ownership, showed that having a dog can improve your longevity. The findings were published in the American Heart Association's Circulation Journal.

According to 10 studies included in the review, dog ownership was associated with a 24% reduction in risk of death compared to non-ownership, with six studies showing "significant reduction in the risk of death."

In one instance, simply petting a dog was found to have the same effect on blood pressure as medication!