



# Pet therapy is helpful for patients of all ages.

*According to PAWS for People, a non-profit that provides pet therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy has the following benefits:*

## Physical Health:

- ♥ Lowered blood pressure
- ♥ Improved cardiovascular health
- ♥ Release endorphins that provide a calming effect
- ♥ Decreased overall physical pain, reducing the amount of medication some patients need
- ♥ Relaxation (petting produces a relaxation response in the body)

## Mental Health:

- ♥ Lifted spirits and lessened depression or anxiety
- ♥ Decreased feelings of loneliness, isolation and alienation
- ♥ Improved communication and socialization
- ♥ Reduced boredom
- ♥ Motivation for the patient to recover faster
- ♥ In dementia patients, visiting with animals may recover memories of their own pets



### GUIDELINES FOR WINDOM AREA HOSPITAL PET THERAPY PROGRAM:

- Dogs will be tested on obedience skills.
- Dogs must be at least 1 year old, but ideally 2 years of age and receive a health evaluation by a licensed veterinarian at least annually.
  - Animals must be healthy and current with immunizations.
  - Dogs must be bathed within 24 hours prior to the visit.
  - Animals should be brushed or combed before the visit to remove as much loose hair, dander and debris as possible.
  - Dog nails should be trimmed short with no rough edges.
  - Visiting sessions are limited to 1 hour to reduce animal fatigue.
  - Animal handlers will complete volunteer orientation and provide proof of up-to-date immunizations before pet visiting sessions are scheduled.
  - Dogs will never be left alone with patients.



If you are interested learning more about our Pet Therapy Program contact Kim Armstrong at the hospital at:  
507-831-0615 or [kimberly.armstrong@sanfordhealth.org](mailto:kimberly.armstrong@sanfordhealth.org).