

Zachary's Paws for Healing Frequently asked questions about pet visits



Research tells us that companion pet visits:

- reduce the patient's stress
- improves vital signs (heart rate, breathing and blood pressure)
- can open communication back up between the patient and their family and medical staff
- reminds the patients there is a reason to get better and return home

Our hearts tell us so much more! A hospital visit with a family dog or cat, brings joy to our patients and their pets.

Patients and pets are a healing combination! This handout provides answers to common questions our patients and families often ask about pet visits. Please connect with us if you have any concerns about a pet visit.

Zachary's Paws for Healing www.zacharyspawsforhealing.com

Does my pet need to be a therapy dog or have special training?

Your dog or cat doesn't need any special training to visit you in the hospital. Loving you is enough. The visit is for you and your pet to share plenty of cuddles and kisses!

What if my pet gets too nervous or anxious?

Most pets get a little anxious when they arrive at the hospital, so many new sounds and smells. Once your pet sees you, joy will help settle and your pet will focus only on you.

Can my pet be too old to visit?

If your pet is in good health and has no open wounds, age is not a problem. We take plenty of time to allow your pet to get used to the hospital. Like most pets, your pet will be overjoyed to see you, brighten up and relax.

My family and friends do a lot for me. Will asking them to bring my pet, be too much?

We realize that you are feeling a bit overwhelmed with all the help you may need from your family and friends. You may be reluctant to ask your family to bring your pet for a visit. You do not want to bother them. Your loved ones only want what is best for you, and that includes a reunion with you and your pet.

Your social worker is happy to speak with your family about arranging a pet visit. Ask to see your social worker and to discuss your desire to see your pet. Your family is probably very aware that your pet is sad and confused about your absence, so bringing your pet spreads joy all around.



We make the visit fit into your family's schedule. Pet visits can happen on days, evenings and weekends.

What if my pet sheds a lot?

All dogs and cats shed dander and most shed hair. Not to worry if your pet is a heavy shedder, we have procedures to take care of the hair. Shedding should not be a reason you aren't visiting with your pet.

What if my pet barks or meows?

We do not expect your pet to be super quiet during the visit to the hospital. In fact, once your pet sees you and settles in, we find that there is little barking or meowing done.

What if my pet has a potty accident?

Accidents happen! We encourage that your pet does not get anything to eat or drink a few hours before the visit. We also will offer a comfort break before coming up to your room. If there is an accident, our volunteer will gladly take care of the clean up. We will contact housekeeping when the visit is over to mop the floor.

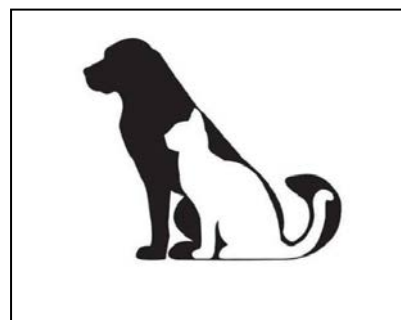
What if my pet doesn't like other people?

This is a private family pet visit and no one comes near your pet except our volunteer and the family. To discourage the general public from touching, talking to or reaching out to your pet, we transport pets in a covered crate on wheels.

What if my pet is too active and uncontrollable or just too big?

No matter how active your pet is normally, they tend to settle once they see you. Amazingly enough, pets realize the situation is different, they want to cuddle and be reassured you are still in their life.

We encourage all dog and cat visits. They can be a tiny toy or a huge Bull Mastiff.



Size does not matter!

What if my pet is not used to a crate?

Our crate is a huge Great Dane crate. It is lavishly cushioned and covered. We provide treats and toys to help pets adjust to the crate. The crate being covered helps to calm the pet.

It's a smooth ride! The crate is on silent smooth moving wheels which makes for a comfortable ride. The pet is usually not in the crate for more than 10 minutes.

I have a roommate. Can I still have my pet visit?

We have a Roommate Agreement that must be signed that states it's okay for your pet to visit in the shared room. If your roommate has pet allergies or is fearful of animals, the visit will take place in one of the family conference rooms nearby.

My family member is unconscious or sometimes confused, can our pet still visit?

We do not know how much an unconscious patient hears or understands. Pet visits can offer a calming effect on confused patients and can be very positive. Having your pet visit is a positive experience for both the patient and pet. **Comfort** is what you will see when pet and patient touch.

My family member is nearing end-of-life, does it really matter if they see their pet?

Yes it matters a great deal. Patients need to have a chance to say goodbye to all their loved ones including their companion pet. We do many "End-of-Life" visits and we believe it helps to ease the patient.

Who can help me set up a visit with my pet?

Your nurse is the first person you should let know you would like your pet to visit. They will either contact us directly or ask the social worker on your unit to contact us. We typically have pet visits arranged within 48 to 72 hours of the requests.