

Pediatric Therapy Network

Questions to Ask When Thinking About Pet Adoption

Do you rent or own?	<p>Rent: Does the landlord allow pets? Different places may allow different types or sizes of animals.</p> <p>Own: Are all animals allowed under your home owners insurance? Each insurance provider has its own policies regarding which animals are or are not covered. Separate insurance policies are available to cover animals excluded from certain policies.</p>
How big is your home?	<p>While having a small home shouldn't deter you from adopting, it may impact the size or type of animal that will fit comfortably with you and your family.</p> <p>Having and allowing dogs access to a backyard does not ensure that they are getting enough exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ While dogs may be initially active once moving outdoors, (given their pack nature, dogs will typically run the perimeter of their space looking for signs of intruders), they, like most human, need a reason to exercise or be active.◆ Solitary dogs rest 80% of their alone time; Multiple dogs rest 60% of their alone time◆ Research shows that dogs need to move at a pace of 4-4.7 miles/hour (14-15 minute miles) to achieve meaningful cardiovascular benefits
How loud are your surroundings?	<p>Frequent outside noise may startle an animal.</p>
Is your family active?	<p>Taking your dog out for walks, hiking or on camping trips would be beneficial while going out for dinner every day and not including your dog would not be beneficial.</p>
Do you have time to devote to training / exercising your new pet?	<p>While exercise recommendations may change based on age, breed, size and general health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Dogs should receive on average 30 minutes - two hours of activity per day◆ Cats should be engaged in activity for at least 10-15 minutes several times a day◆ Rabbits need a minimum of three hours of run time per day (and are most active in the morning and evening)
What's your lifestyle?	<p>Take your daily work and school schedules into consideration; therapy or appointments; team practices or social clubs.</p>

<p>What are your expectations for the pet?</p>	<p>Cuddle, sit quietly on the couch; Be active, go on hikes, runs, long walks; Be a companion for the children; Act as a service animal</p> <p>According to ADA, "A service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability." Examples include: Guide Dog or Seeing Eye® Dog, Hearing or Signal Dog, Psychiatric Service Dog, SSigDOG (sensory signal or social signal dog), or Seizure Response Dog</p>
<p>Do you know if you or anyone in your family is allergic to animals?</p>	<p>3 in 10 people with allergies are allergic to animals (cats being primary). Animal related allergies are generally found in 2 different ways:</p> <p><u>Pet Dander</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The allergic reaction is not to the fur, but to proteins found in dander (dead skin flakes), urine, and saliva. These proteins are small enough to enter the lungs to initiate asthma attacks <p><u>Pet Food Allergies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The 8 types of foods which account for 90% of food allergies include: Eggs, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy ◆ In a 2015 study, 86.9% contained 1 food and 43.9% contained 2 foods from the above list ◆ Top 3 overall: wheat (47.9%), egg (36.9%), fish (28.9%); Dogs: wheat (50.6%), egg (33.2%), and soy (25.7%); Cats: fish (45.8%), wheat (43.7%), and egg (42.7%) ◆ Those allergic to hay (primary food) may have difficulty around rabbits <p><u>Allergy Testing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Exposure to animals to assess pet allergies ◆ Highly sensitive people may begin coughing/wheezing after 15-30 minutes. More mild case may require multiple days of contact prior to any reactions ◆ Skin tests can be completed to assess for pets allergies ◆ Research appropriate pet food brands to eliminate food contact allergies
<p>Do you or anyone in your family have any balance and coordination considerations?</p>	<p><u>For People with Poor Balance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Be careful of animals that may jump up, get tangled under feet, or bump into a person while standing <p><u>For People with Poor Coordination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Larger, slower animals may be easier to pet and hold <p><u>For People with Jerky/Sporadic Movements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Look for animals that do not startle easily or require precise movements/handling for their everyday care

Do you or anyone in your family have any sensory considerations?

Difficulties with Touch

- ◆ Sensitive to Touch: May react negatively and emotionally to touch sensations, when compared to others (e.g., unexpected touch, light touch from an animal brushing up against them)
- ◆ If a person experiences sensitivity to touch or are overly fearful or anxious in anticipation of being touched (such as the animal being in the same room), look for an animal that does not seek out much physical contact— Rabbits or other small animals to be interacted with in a cage; Independent cats; Older, slower moving dogs; dogs with more predictable movements (such as not a jumper)

Poor Tactile Discrimination and Gradation of Force

- ◆ If a person has trouble discriminating the amount of force needed to pet or hold an animal (touch/pet too firmly, squeeze too tightly, pulls on the ears or tails, grasps long fur too tightly), look for larger dogs, avoid smaller cats or rabbits

Sensitivity to Sounds

- ◆ If a person reacts negatively and/or emotionally with loud or unexpected noises or has difficulties with continuous barking, look for a more mellow animal—Basenji are the only barkless dog; Consider the pitch of the dogs bark (larger dogs tend to have a lower pitched bark than small dogs); Cats tend to vocalize less than dogs

Sleep Difficulties

- ◆ If a person has difficulties sleeping, consider the animals sleep tendencies: Rabbits tend to be the most active during the morning or evenings; Cats are nocturnal and may be up and about during the night; A larger dog that

During the Adoption Process

Don't be afraid to ask questions:

- ◆ What is the animal's temperament? While it may not be possible to know the exact breed at an animal shelter, adoption counselors should know specific behavioral characteristics of each specific animal
- ◆ Are they good with kids? Previous experience around kids; tolerate fast or unpredictable movements; tolerate handling?

Be honest about your wants and needs:

- ◆ Independent vs. needy / Active vs. sedentary

Interact and touch the animal:

- ◆ Gage any allergic reactions
- ◆ Assess any tactile difficulties with sensitive family members
- ◆ Address possible encounter with current pet (if possible)