

Seven Reasons Why You Should Sleep with Your Dog

If you avoid sleeping with your dog because you're afraid you may not sleep well or you'll catch a disease, it may be time to put those worries aside. Turns out there may be many more benefits to your well-being than risks. Here are seven reasons why you should consider co-sleeping with your dog.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Surveys suggest that 56% of dog owners sleep with their dog next to them, with about 50% of the dogs sleeping in their owner's bed
- The physical presence of your dog next to you provides a source of companionship and comfort
- Forty-one percent of pet owners perceive their pets as unobtrusive or even beneficial to sleep
- Service animals, and perhaps even pets, could be beneficial in the support of sleep disorders including obstructive sleep apnea, nightmares and narcolepsy
- Among people with chronic pain, having a dog in the bed helped many fall asleep and stay asleep

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published November 30, 2018.

If you curl up every night next to your favorite pooch, count yourself in good company. Surveys suggest that 56% of dog owners sleep with their dog next to them, with about 50% of the dogs sleeping in their owner's bed. Size matters when it comes to sleeping arrangements, as among dogs that sleep with their owners, 62% are small dogs, 41% are medium and 32% are large.¹

Despite its popularity, it's been suggested that sleeping with your dog may interfere with your sleep or even transmit diseases, but there are likely many more benefits than risks when it comes to sharing your sleeping space with your dog. Doing so may even result in significant benefits to your health!

Seven Reasons Why Sleeping with Your Dog Is Good for You

1. **It increases feelings of security and contentment** — The physical presence of your dog next to you provides a source of companionship and comfort. Your dog's rhythmic breathing, soft fur and warm body all contribute to this soothing effect. In fact, in a study published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings,² many of those surveyed said they felt secure, content and relaxed when their pet slept nearby.

From a safety standpoint, your dog's sensitive sense of smell and hearing can also alert you if anything unusual happens during the night, likely well before you'd otherwise notice. Having your dog nearby adds a source of protection.

2. **It's conducive to getting a good night's rest** — If you're wondering whether sharing your bed with your dog affects your sleep quality, you can rest easy. One study used fitness trackers to accurately gauge sleeping time for dogs and humans sharing a bedroom.³ During the seven-day study, sleep efficiency, which is a measure of how much time is actually spent sleeping while in bed, was high — 81% for owners and 85% for dogs.

A sleep efficiency score of 80% or higher is considered to be indicative of a good night's rest. Further, 41% of pet owners perceived their pets as unobtrusive or even beneficial to sleep.⁴

3. **Dogs may help with sleep disorders** — Many people with service animals sleep with their dogs, who may alert them to a medical problem during the night. However, sleep professionals suggest that service animals, and perhaps even pets, could be beneficial in the support of sleep disorders including obstructive sleep apnea, nightmares and narcolepsy. According to a review published in *Sleep Review*:⁵

"One of the greatest benefits of SAs, particularly for medically complicated patients, is that they offer a nonpharmacological solution to treating a sleep disorder in a way that may augment or even replace other (currently standard care) treatments."

4. **It may help combat depression** — People with depression often have trouble sleeping, but inviting your dog into your bed may help, as your dog can help to relieve associated feelings of stress, loneliness and anxiety.
5. **Warmth and comfort** — The warmth from your pet can act like a hot water bottle on a cold night, helping you to stay cozy and lulling you off to sleep. In fact, your pet may keep you so warm that it's possible to overheat, so you may want to turn your thermostat down a couple of notches if your dog is in your bed.

As noted by Stanley Coren, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia, "The term 'three dog night' comes from the Canadian maritime provinces, where it was standard practice to take your dog (or dogs) to bed with you on a cold night to help keep you warm."⁶

6. **Increased relaxation and bonding** — Not only do dogs help their owners relieve stress, but being close to your dog increases production of the hormone oxytocin, which is linked to bonding and feelings of affection and happiness,⁷ while lowering your heart rate.⁸
7. **Improved sleep in people with chronic pain** — Among people with chronic pain, having a dog in the bed helped many fall asleep and stay asleep, with researchers noting that participants' dogs enhanced their sleep in many ways.⁹ Researcher Cary Brown, Ph.D., of the University of Alberta told *Folio*:¹⁰

"Typically, people who have pain also have a lot of sleep problems, so usually if they ask their health-care provider about a pet, they're told to get the pet out of the bedroom. But that standard advice can actually be damaging ..."

They [study participants] liked the physical contact with their dogs — cuddling before bed, and how it distracted them from feeling anxious about being alone at night. They felt more relaxed and safer so they weren't anxious as they were trying to sleep ... A sense of relaxation and caring are emotions that release positive hormones in our bodies that will help us sleep better."

For those of you wondering, sleeping with a cat may confer many of these same benefits.

Who Shouldn't Sleep with Their Pet?

While most people can safely enjoy sleeping next to their pets, there are some minor risks. The biggest one is likely that your pet could crowd your sleeping space or paw at your face for a midnight snack. It could also lead to arguments with your human sleeping partner if you're not on the same page about co-sleeping with your pets.

For people with allergies, pets may also not be the best bed buddies, as pet dander will become infiltrated not only into your bedroom but also into your bedsheets. Very young children, including infants, should also avoid sleeping with any snuggly animal, as they often like to cuddle up close and could inadvertently suffocate a baby.

Most pets also have the potential to transmit certain diseases to their owners, so if you have a compromised immune system, you may want to give your pet a separate sleeping space. For most pet owners, however, the happiness and health benefits that come from sharing their bedroom with their pet far outweigh any downsides.

Sources and References

¹ [CDC, Zoonoses in the Bedroom January 26, 2011 \(PDF\)](#)

^{2, 4} [Mayo Clinic Proceedings December 2015](#)

³ [Mayo Clinic Proceedings September 2017 Volume 92, Issue 9, Pages 1368-1372](#)

⁵ [Sleep Review June 22, 2015](#)

^{6, 7} [Psychology Today September 14, 2017](#)

⁸ [Anthrozoos April 28, 2015](#)

⁹ [Soc. Sci. 2018, 7\(9\), 157](#)

¹⁰ [Folio October 12, 2018](#)
