



Animal-Assisted Therapy Supports Children and Teens With Cancer

Facility dogs can be important members of the care team. They can help support children and teens with cancer and their families through animal-assisted therapy (AAT).



What is AAT?

AAT uses specially trained animals – often dogs – to improve the health and hospital experience of children and teens with cancer. AAT can be a key part of a patient’s treatment plan. A facility dog, working alongside its handler, can help:



Encourage a patient to be more physically active.



Explain procedures through medical play.



Motivate a patient to engage in care.



Offer comfort and distraction during stressful moments.

How does AAT benefit children and teens with cancer?

AAT can help children and teens with cancer feel better during their hospital stay. Through the presence of a facility dog, they may:

- Feel less stress and anxiety.
- Have less pain during cancer treatment.
- Become more resilient.
- Have positive memories about their time in the hospital.



To learn more about AAT, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/coping/support-service-animals or call 1-800-227-2345. We’re here when you need us.

Photo credits:

1. Chance, with his mom, Donna, and facility dog, Dumpling, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, with permission.
2. Lexy with facility dog, Jellybean, at Children’s Mercy Kansas City, with permission
3. Elias with facility dog, Dumpling, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, with permission.