Numerous studies show animals help lower blood pressure, reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, combat depression, and make it easier for a senior to socialize. Animals can be wonderful companions for seniors, but they require care and must be a good match for their human partner.

With this in mind, Holiday Retirement put together a checklist to help choose the correct pet for an older adult.

**FIND A SUITABLE BREED**

Size does matter when you are choosing a companion for your golden years. You’ll want to find a pet that fits your needs.

Smaller pets are easier to pick up and take places, including veterinarian appointments, grooming salons, or vacations. Larger pets, like dogs, may be more difficult to carry and if not trained properly, can be a safety issue for a senior.

**THE TOP THREE RECOMMENDED DOG BREEDS FOR SENIORS**

1. **Pomeranian**: These dogs are very small and easy to handle. They are energetic and athletic, but do not require an excessive amount of exercise.

2. **Shih Tzu**: They are known as loyal, friendly, gentle dogs that love to bond with members of the family. This breed tends to bark loudly when visitors arrive at the door.

3. **Pug**: This popular pet is known to adapt to any lifestyle, whether active or more relaxed. Pugs are considered happy little bundles of joy.

**CONSIDER THE AGE OF THE ANIMAL**

First, we recommend getting an older pet. With an older dog, cat, or bird, you are more likely to understand the pet's health history and temperament.

Second, if you adopt or purchase an older pet, it's likely to have learned some obedience and skills in its earlier years. Adult pets are more apt to be reliably trained.

Do you have any mobility issues that will make training a pet a challenge? If so, it would be best to opt for an adult pet.

**THE TOP THREE RECOMMENDED CAT BREEDS FOR SENIORS**

1. **Birman**: These longhair cats have a moderate activity level. They're known to be affectionate, gentle, and intelligent.

2. **Ragdoll**: This longhair cat is loving and placid, known for its affectionate and laid-back personality. It tends to have a moderate activity level.

3. **British Shorthair**: This shorthair cat is a good-natured breed. While playful as a kitten, it tends to mellow out quickly.
THE TOP THREE RECOMMENDED BIRD BREEDS FOR SENIORS

1. Canaries: These birds are sweet and colorful. Not only are they small and easy to care for, they’re also fun to watch and don’t require much attention.

2. Parakeet: Known as the most popular small bird species, this type of parrot requires more human interaction than most, so they do best in a situation where you can play and interact with them frequently.

3. Zebra Finches: These delightful birds are a popular choice for seniors. Their sweet, quiet vocalizations are pleasant to listen to. They enjoy relaxing in their cages, so there’s no need to allow out-of-cage playtime for a finch.

Not sure about any of these options? Fish can also be wonderful pets. They’re affordable and require minimal maintenance.

TEMPERAMENT OF THE PET

Before you bring a new dog or cat into your home, consider how the pet’s personality will mesh with your own. If possible, test the temperament of your prospective pet to assess its personality.

You can easily do this by observing the pet’s behavior for a few minutes. Watch to see how it interacts with others. If its actions complements your personality, you have a perfect fit!

YOUR MEDICAL NEEDS

It’s important to consider your medical needs. For example, do you have oxygen tubing? Puppies and cats love to play and chew on it!

Otherwise, dogs are perfect if you need more exercise. Cats, fish, or birds are a better choice if you are unable to exercise frequently.

Visit www.holidaytouch.com/petsforseniors to learn more about seniors and their pets at Holiday Retirement communities near you.

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