



## Pets and Children With Disabilities

As a parent or caregiver of a child with disabilities, many may wonder if having a pet would be a good idea or even a possibility. In many instances, research has shown that not only can it be possible, but that it may bring many benefits for a child. Depending on the type of disability, there are several different pets that can be considered.

According to the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI): “The human-animal bond provides benefits to health at every stage of life. Research demonstrates the positive influence of human-animal interaction (HAI), including pet ownership and animal-assisted therapy, on a child’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Childhood pets have been shown to provide physical and emotional support to children throughout their childhood, including after experiencing trauma.

Specifically, research has found that:

- Attachment to pets can promote healthy social development, social competence, increased social interaction, improved social communication, and social play in children
- Companion animals can help children learn to express and understand non-verbal communication and decipher intentions, which leads to improved emotional understanding and expression.
- Family pets can provide a significant impact on a child’s development by providing an opportunity for a child to care for a dependent.

- Research shows having the opportunity to care for a dependent fulfills the child’s need to feel important and needed, and to have a purpose.
- Research suggests that successfully caring for a pet is positively correlated to importance, social competence, and self-esteem.
- One study shows that the sense of achievement a child feels when they have successfully cared for a pet develops their sense of self.”

If your child is not ready for a pet, he can still enjoy some of the benefits of interacting with an animal. You can try professional animal therapy. Speak with your child’s medical provider for referrals. Also, if you have a friend or family member with a pet that your child would enjoy, schedule some “supervised visits” with the pet.

Some places such as “Safe in Austin” introduce their rescue animals to children that come from similar backgrounds. Read more about them at [www.safeinaustin.org](http://www.safeinaustin.org) and at [www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/10/12/this-texas-farm-connects-special-needs-kids-with-injured-animals-they-re-just-like-me](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/10/12/this-texas-farm-connects-special-needs-kids-with-injured-animals-they-re-just-like-me).

For many children living with various mental and/or physical challenges, being near or caring for animals at home can have incredibly positive and everlasting effects. What is important is to make sure that you do proper research and if possible, involve the child and his medical provider in choosing the perfect pet.

### News & Events

- **Sensory-Friendly Days at the Nasher**  
The Nasher will be offering in-person Sensory-Friendly Days with free admission and self-directed activities Thursdays–Sundays, February 25–28 and March 4–7.

Nasher Sculpture Center  
2001 Flora Street,  
Dallas, TX, 75201

For more information visit:  
[www.nashersculpturecenter.org/programs-events/programs-list/program/id/134](http://www.nashersculpturecenter.org/programs-events/programs-list/program/id/134)

- **Girl Scouts Exhibit & Cookies Sales**  
Throughout the month of March, Galleria Dallas shoppers will enjoy a historic retrospective of Girl Scouting from 1912 to the present.

As a part of the exhibit, guests can use a QR code to donate boxes of Girl Scout cookies to healthcare heroes at Children’s Health.

On Fridays and Saturday in March, Girl Scouts will be offering curbside purchase and delivery of cookies from the circular drive along Galleria Dallas’ storied Alley. Curbside sale of cookies will be available throughout March on Fridays from 5–7 p.m. and Saturdays 12–7 p.m.

The organization hopes this event will help them recoup over 100,000 boxes of lost sales due to changes forced by the pandemic.

Galleria Dallas  
13350 Dallas Parkway,  
Dallas, TX, 75240

For more information visit: <https://galleriadallas.com/programs/events/support-girl-scouts-of-north-east-texas>

## Resources

### • **VIVA Pediatrics Resources**

In an effort to help our families, we constantly strive to provide them with relevant and helpful resources and information. Visit our resources page online at: [www.vivaped.com/resources](http://www.vivaped.com/resources)

For current events visit us on Facebook. [www.facebook.com/VIVAPeds](http://www.facebook.com/VIVAPeds)

### • **Care Starter App**

The Connections App is a complete resource guide for families of kids, teens and adults with special needs. Their goal is to help you find providers, organizations and other resources in your community to help you along your path of care. Download the CareStarter App now! [www.carestarter.co/connectionsapp](http://www.carestarter.co/connectionsapp)



### • **The Parker Lee Project**

The Parker Lee Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping families of children with medical needs obtain the necessary supplies & equipment, education, and support they need. While most supplies are covered by insurance, some are not, or not enough supplies are provided. If you have a need for medical supplies or have supplies to donate, please visit their website at [www.theparkerleeproject.org](http://www.theparkerleeproject.org)

### • **Texas Star Kids**

The Texas' Star Kids mandate threatens the lives of our weakest and most vulnerable little citizens. Join us in standing up for those who have no voice. Click this link to sign up: [www.facebook.com/ProtectTXFragileKids](http://www.facebook.com/ProtectTXFragileKids)  
For more info visit: [www.protecttxfragilekids.org](http://www.protecttxfragilekids.org)

### • **Thrive Magazine**

Need Resources for your child with special needs? Thrive Magazine shares resources and stories of other families in the DFW area who are living and thriving with special needs. [www.dfwchild.com/thrive/directory](http://www.dfwchild.com/thrive/directory)

### • **Recognize a VIVA Star**

Viva Pediatrics has an Employee Rewards and Recognition Program to thank and recognize employees that go "above and beyond". Both employees and patient families are welcome to recognize a VIVA employee! Call one of our offices and let us know if a VIVA employee has gone above and beyond!



## Get Healthy with Giggles

### Children and Nutrition

Spring has arrived and with it comes warmer weather and seasonal allergies. Seasonal allergies is sometimes referred to as hay fever and is primarily caused by pollen released from plants. It's no secret that younger children are prone to get sick more often than not. It can seem like they are constantly sneezing, coughing or wiping a runny nose. Seasonal allergies in children can often look like a common cold but it's important to take some special considerations into account.

Symptoms in toddlers can include scratchy throats, coughing, sneezing, runny or itchy noses, irritated eyes and wheezing. Children who are more susceptible to skin irritations can also break out in hives or eczema. It's always the safer option to have children tested for possible allergens at their pediatrician's office rather than self-diagnosing. There are several factors that come into play such as age, severity and frequency of symptoms and family history. It's important to consult a pediatrician before using over the counter medications so that there are no complications with other medicines that are being taken as well.

The best way to prevent seasonal allergies is to prevent symptoms before they start. When pollen counts start getting too high, be sure to close all windows and stay indoors whenever possible. Air filters can also reduce allergens in your home. With the appropriate medication and preventative measures, you and your family can spend less time stuck inside and more time enjoying the beautiful weather.

Happy Spring!

## Food for Thought



### Best Blueberry Muffins

#### Ingredients

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 ¼ cups white sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 1 pint fresh blueberries
- 2 tablespoons white sugar

#### Directions

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray top of a muffin pan with non-stick coating, and line with paper liners.
- In large bowl, cream together butter, 1 1/4 cups sugar and salt until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time.
- Mix together 1 3/4 cup of flour and baking powder. Beat in flour mixture alternately with the buttermilk, mixing just until incorporated.
- Crush 1/4 of the blueberries, and stir into the batter.
- Mix the rest of the whole blueberries with the remaining 1/4 cup of flour, and fold into the batter. Scoop into muffin cups.
- Sprinkle tops lightly with sugar.
- Bake for 30 minutes, or until golden brown.

## What do you get from a pampered cow?



Spoiled Milk!



Just for Giggles!