

# Women Sleep Better with a Dog in Their Bed

Compared to their human sleeping partners, women rated dogs as less disruptive to sleep and better for comfort and security. The survey results support a growing number of studies that show sharing a bed with your dog can have significant benefits.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Nearly 1,000 U.S. women were surveyed about pet ownership and sleep; 55% of the respondents shared their bed with at least one dog (and 31% did so with at least one cat)
- Women who slept with dogs found that their pets were better bed partners than their human companions, including being less disruptive to sleep and providing greater feelings of comfort and security
- The study was observational in nature, so further research is needed to determine if the participants' perceptions of better sleep can be confirmed via objective measures of sleep quality
- For people with chronic pain or sleep disorders, dogs can provide significant benefits, including relaxation, anxiety reduction, and support for conditions like sleep apnea and narcolepsy
- While co-sleeping with dogs is generally beneficial, individuals with allergies, compromised immune systems, or partners who object to pet co-sleeping should carefully consider their specific circumstances

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published February 28, 2019.***

Pet owners commonly share their sleeping spaces with their dogs, and, as is the case with human sleeping partners, this can have both positives and negatives for your sleep. Researchers continue to investigate pets' role on human sleep quality, and in one of the latest studies took a closer look at how women fare when sleeping with their pets.<sup>1</sup>

The study involved nearly 1,000 U.S. women, who were surveyed about pet ownership and sleep. Notably, 55% of the respondents shared their bed with at least one dog (and 31% did so with at least one cat). That's almost the same amount who shared their bed with a human (57%).

A few notable trends were observed. First, dog owners tended to go to bed and wake earlier than cat owners. Women who slept with dogs also found that their pets were better bed partners than their human companions, with researchers noting, "Compared with human bed partners, dogs who slept in the owner's bed were perceived to disturb sleep less and were associated with stronger feelings of comfort and security."<sup>2</sup>

The study was observational in nature, so further research is needed to determine if the participants' perceptions of better sleep can be confirmed via objective measures of sleep quality, but the results seem to support the handful before it that have also linked pets in the bedroom with a sound night's sleep.

## Fitness Trackers Reveal It's Fine to Sleep with Your Dog

It's long been assumed that having a dog in your bed is disruptive to sleep. Some dogs are, in fact, notorious for hogging the covers, taking up more than their fair share of space and barking at invisible intruders just as you're about to nod off.

Yet, when researchers outfitted dogs with Fitbark, an activity- and sleep-monitoring device, and owners with Actiwatch 2, a similar device for humans, they found both dogs and their owners slept soundly.<sup>3</sup> A sleep efficiency score of 80% or higher is considered to be indicative of a good night's rest, and both owners and their dogs had high marks — 81% for owners and 85% for dogs.

In a separate study published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings, 41% of pet owners perceived their pets as unobtrusive or even **beneficial to sleep**,<sup>4</sup> with many of those surveyed saying they felt secure, content and relaxed when their pet slept nearby.

## Most Dog Owners Let Pets Sleep in Their Bed

In a survey conducted by the American Kennel Club (AKC), 45% of dog owners welcomed their dog in their bed. Only a minority had their dogs sleeping elsewhere, including in a crate (20%), dog bed (17%) or various places indoors (14%).<sup>5</sup> Clearly, it appears most pet owners are willing to put up with a few of the downsides of pets in their bed (like dog hair on your sheets) in order to reap the benefits. Researchers even suggest that co-sleeping with your dog is natural and similar to co-sleeping with a child:<sup>6</sup>

*“By using dogs as an exemplar of human-animal co-sleeping, and comparing human-canine sleeping with adult-child co-sleeping, we determine that both forms of co-sleeping share common factors for establishment and maintenance, and often result in similar benefits and drawbacks.*

*We propose that human-animal and adult-child co-sleeping should be approached as legitimate and socially relevant forms of co-sleeping, and we recommend that co-sleeping be approached broadly as a social practice involving relations with humans and other animals.”*

Many pet owners enjoy the physical warmth and sound of rhythmic breathing that a pet sleeping nearby provides. Among people with chronic pain, who often have trouble staying asleep, dogs helped with relaxation and anxiety, ultimately enhancing patients' sleep in one study.<sup>7</sup>

What's more, people with service animals often sleep with their dogs, who can even provide support for sleep disorders including obstructive sleep apnea, nightmares and narcolepsy.<sup>8</sup> It's also a proven fact that being close to your dog increases production of the hormone oxytocin, which is linked to bonding and feelings of affection and happiness,<sup>9</sup> lowered heart rate<sup>10</sup> and contentment.

So if having your dog next to you for a snuggle gives you all the feels, it's not in your imagination. While there are a few instances where sleeping with your pet may not be wise, namely if you have allergies or a compromised immune system, or if your partner objects to co-sleeping with your pet, leading to arguments, it's perfectly fine — and even beneficial — to sleep with your pet.

And as the featured study suggested, in some ways sleeping with your dog may be even more conducive to sleep than sharing the bed with your human partner — but that's up to you to decide!

## Sources and References

<sup>1, 2</sup> [Anthrozoos November 13, 2018](#)

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

<sup>4</sup> [Mayo Clinic Proceedings, 2015 Dec;90\(12\):1663-5](#)

<sup>5</sup> [AKC January 22, 2018](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Hum Nat. 2017 Sep;28\(3\):255-273](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Soc. Sci. 2018, 7\(9\), 157](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Sleep Review June 22, 2015](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Psychology Today September 14, 2017](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Anthrozoos April 28, 2015](#)

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