



## THE BENEFITS OF ROBOTIC PETS

Robotic pets have a remarkable effect on women (and men) in the middle and later stages of dementia. They are calming, and soothing and bring the person back to a time in their life when they felt useful and had a sense of purpose; when caring for a young family member was the #1 priority. Robot pet therapy helps patients escape from a world where someone is always caring for them.



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- Robotic Pets



**SENSUPPORT**  
Loan Program

**ROBOTIC  
PETS**





## What Are Robotic Pets?

Robotic pets are designed for people with dementia, who sometimes cannot tell the difference between stuffed animals and real pets.

Most of these toys are interactive, with sensors that respond to touch. A robotic dog will bark or wag its tail when petted; the robotic cat might purr or lick its paws. They are also designed to make a sound if left alone for a period of time.

These elements make them a great option for a person with a very short attention span - the interaction can keep them engaged for longer, and the sound can draw them back in if they wander away.

## Virtual Animal Companionship

You may have heard of therapy animals before - pets with special training that visit hospitals or nursing homes to provide the anxiety and depression-reducing benefits of being around animals. When real animals are not available or practical, robotic pets can provide similar benefits.



## Who are Robotic Pets for?

In earlier stages of dementia, a person will recognize that the doll is not real. Do not try and convince them. Instead, try another item from the Victoria County Home Support Services lending library.

## Starting Out

It may take a few days for a person with dementia to warm up to a robotic pet. Try it out for a week or two and see how it goes.

They may wonder where things like a litter box, leash, or collar are. Reassure them that you're taking good care of it!

The pets have different settings - you can flip a switch to mute it or turn it off completely. Turning it off at night is a good idea to save the batteries (and avoid getting woken up!).



## Signs of Success

Watch the person's body language closely when they are interacting with the pet. Do you notice a difference? They should be calm, content, and interested in the pet. You might also see reductions in behaviours like yelling or crying.

There is no correct length of time for a person to use a robotic pet. Some people are occupied all day, and others will pick it up for a few minutes at a time. Both are successes!

## HELPFUL HINTS

1

### SUPERVISE

Robotic pets are pretty sturdy but can still break. Try to avoid things like knocking it off a table.

2

### PLAY ALONG

Ask if the robotic pet is real. Handle it gently, and ask the person's permission before petting or holding it.

3

### KEEP IT CLEAN

Robotic pets can be hard to clean. Keep it out of reach during mealtime or when serving. Spot clean with a damp cloth or toothbrush if needed!