

5 Reasons why your dog needs so much sleep



You've probably noticed that your puppy or dog sleeps a lot, certainly more than you do! According to the [Kennel Club](#), new-born puppies sleep for up to 90% of any 24-hour period. And even adult dogs need 12-14 hours' sleep. [Studies](#) show that dogs follow the same sleep pattern as humans, with cycles of drowsiness and deep, REM sleep. They also do most of their sleeping at night. But, unlike humans, dogs sleep in shorter, more frequent bouts, which is why they also nap during the day. And, while all that snoozing might look lazy, in fact it's as important for your dog's physical and mental health as getting a good night's sleep is for yours. Here's why...

1. Sleep boosts your dog's immune system.

Research overwhelming supports the idea that [sleep boosts our immune systems](#) – and the same is thought to be true for your dog too. While asleep, both species produce a hormone called melatonin, which helps balance the immune system.

2. Sleep helps your dog learn new things.

Like humans, dogs are much better at processing and remembering new information if they've had enough sleep. In a [2017 study](#) researchers measured the brain activity of dogs while they slept. The dogs that had learnt a new task before they went to sleep showed more "sleep spindles". Sleep spindles are bursts of activity, associated with memory consolidation. The more sleep spindles a dog showed in their brain activity while asleep, the better they were able to perform the task again after they woke up. Interestingly, the female dogs in the study had more sleep spindles than the male dogs and consistently outperformed them. Which apparently also matches studies with humans!

3. Lack of sleep can contribute to weight gain.

Not getting enough sleep is widely recognised as a risk factor for obesity and diabetes in humans. A [2020 study](#) demonstrated that the same is true for dogs. It found that just one night without sleep was enough to make a dog as sensitive to insulin as a dog fed on a very high fat diet. The researchers concluded that a continued lack of sleep would put a dog at risk of diabetes.

4. Lack of sleep can contribute to canine dementia in older dogs

[Alzheimer's in humans](#) is thought to be caused, in part at least, by a build-up on the brain of a protein called amyloid. Clearing amyloid from our system is one of the things our bodies do when we're asleep. Patients with dementia often struggle to sleep at night and this can lead to a vicious cycle where the amyloid builds up and causes further cognitive decline, which disrupts sleep even further. A [2023 study](#) into sleep and the older dog found a similar link between lack of sleep and symptoms of cognitive decline.

5. Sleep affects your dog's mood.

Feeling grumpy and lethargic after a bad night's sleep is something you may be familiar with! And it turns out your dog feels the same. A [2022 study](#) found that sleep loss in dogs made them less active during the day and less likely to play.

So how can you make sure your dog gets the sleep he needs?

All this research shows that sleep is just as important as diet and exercise, for a healthy, happy dog. Making sure your dog gets the amount and quality he needs starts with creating the right environment for him to sleep in. Give your dog somewhere quiet and comfortable that they can access whenever they feel like a doze. This is particularly important for young puppies and older dogs. A crate can be a great way to give them a “safe space” to call their own. Different breeds have different preferences when it comes to where they sleep and what they sleep on. While some larger breeds like a big bed and a cooler room temperature, smaller breeds often prefer a warmer room and a bed they can burrow into. Read our blog on “How to choose the right bed for your dog”.