



Inappropriate Urinating in Cats

Urinating outside the litterbox is a common and frustrating situation. There are several possible underlying conditions that may result in inappropriate urinating. The first priority is to identify a medical cause. A thorough history is important to identify frequency, pattern, other abnormalities or changes in routine and signs of discomfort in the patient. Increased drinking and urinating, and weight loss are key signs of an underlying systemic disease. Common medical conditions that affect the urinary health of cats include kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, bladder stones, bladder inflammation (cystitis), urinary tract infection, thyroid disease, and cancer. Pain is another often under-recognized cause of inappropriate bathroom use. Certain medications can also cause changes in urine routine.

Diagnostics will involve bloodwork and urine testing to identify underlying medical conditions. Imaging with radiographs and/or ultrasonography will be needed to identify urinary stones and evidence of cancer.

If diagnostics come back normal, behavioral causes should be considered. It is well established that there is strong link between stress and internal inflammatory conditions in cats that often manifest as inflammation of the urinary bladder and pancreas. In cats, inflammation of the urinary bladder is sometimes referred to as Feline Lower Urinary Tract disease (FLUTD) or Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC). Inflammation of the bladder can look very similar to signs of a urinary tract infection with increased frequency of urinating, discomfort, straining, vocalizing on urination, and urinating outside the litterbox. It is very important to note that inflammation can lead to mucus accumulation. Male cats (including neutered males) are especially vulnerable to urethral blockage when this happens and this is a **medical emergency**.

Treatment

If a male cat is showing signs of straining, frequent attempts to urinate, has poor or no urine production, or is vocalizing when attempting to urinate, this is a medical emergency, seek veterinary attention immediately.

Addressing and reducing stress in cats can involve medical and environmental intervention. Pain should always be considered and addressed as this can be both a medical and psychological cause of inappropriate urinating. Cats are perceptive to their owners and other animals at home. They can be sensitive to even seemingly subtle changes in their home environment and routine. Sometimes the presence of an animal outside the home can be a source of stress.

Medical treatment for urinary bladder inflammation often involves an anti-inflammatory, pain medication and anti-anxiety medication, and fluid support.



Stress reduction through various methods can include:

1. Address any tension between animals in the household by providing separate sets of resources (food/water bowls, toys, perches, and litterboxes) and separate quality time with owner(s).
2. Add an additional litterbox -the general rule for number of litterboxes is 1 box per cat plus 1. Cats like to have a choice. Regular, daily cleaning of the litterboxes is very important to encourage them to use the box instead of going elsewhere.
3. Try Cat Attract Litter: designed to be appealing to most cats and to encourage use of the litterbox
4. Diet: Encourage water intake by offering multiple sources of fresh water. Some cats love water fountains. Ideally feed canned food to help support hydration and urinary tract health. Consider a prescription diet such as Hill's c/d stress or urinary health diet. If urine crystals or abnormal pH is identified on labwork, a urinary health diet is recommended.
5. Anti-anxiety supplements
6. Daily anti-anxiety medication should be considered for chronic, recurring cases of inappropriate urinating and when anxiety is strongly suspected based on overall picture and behavior. If stress is predictable, anti-anxiety medication may only be needed during these events/periods (for example, when family is out of town).
7. Mental stimulation, play exercise, extra attention and quality time for TLC.