

# How Vets Stop Their Own Dogs From Peeing in the House

It's a top reason owners relinquish dogs to shelters. While it seems perplexing, once you rule out medical issues you're left with just these 5 reasons. Find out what they are, how to get relief fast, and how I resolved the problem with one of my dogs. You'll be glad you did.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dogs may urinate indoors due to excitement, submission or to mark their territory
- A dog that hasn't learned proper housetraining skills may also urinate indoors
- Certain medical issues can also cause your dog to urinate indoors

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You love your dog and everything about him — except, perhaps, his penchant for urinating in the house. It's a very common problem with multiple causes and getting to the bottom of why your dog is peeing in the house is essential to stopping the behavior.

Unfortunately, some pet owners give up on their dogs all too soon; up to 25% of dogs relinquished to animal shelters by their owners are given up due to housebreaking problems.

Hopefully you understand that, challenging as it may be, you owe it to your dog to work through such issues instead of simply abandoning him.

Fortunately, this isn't an issue you have to simply learn to live with because, in most cases, your dog can be taught to stop urinating in the house and/or it can be resolved with proper medical treatment or behavioral training.

## 5 Top Reasons Why Dogs Pee in the House

There are many reasons why your dog may be urinating indoors. It's essential to find out your dog's reason before moving on to remedying it.

1. **Excitement** — Some dogs piddle on the floor when they're overly excited. This may occur when you come home from work, when a new visitor comes over or while your dog is waiting for a coveted toy, treat or activity (like a walk).

Often, your dog may wiggle, jump and otherwise continue on with his excitement all while urinating.

2. **Submission or fear** — Urination can be a submissive behavior your dog displays when he's scared or overwhelmed. While submissive urination occurs most often in puppies, it can occur in any age dog, typically

after your dog has been scolded or put in an uncomfortable or scary situation.

3. **Housetraining problems** — Dogs must learn the appropriate place to go potty. If your dog hasn't been taught properly, he may urinate indoors simply because he doesn't know any better.
4. **Marking** — Does your dog release small amounts of urine in specific areas around your house, like the corner of your couch or on a pair of shoes you've left by the door? Your dog is marking his territory and asserting or maintaining his social standing in the pack.

Dogs may also overmark or countermark, which is marking over another dog's urine. If you have multiple dogs, once one dog starts marking it can trigger marking in the other dogs as well.

5. **Medical issues** — Anytime a dog urinates in the house, especially if this is a new behavior, medical problems should be ruled out. Urinary infections, bladder stones and crystals, cystitis, kidney disease, Cushing's disease and diabetes are examples of health conditions that may cause your dog to urinate in the house.

## Excitement-Related and Submissive Urination Are Behavioral Issues

If your dog urinates due to excitement or submission, this isn't a housebreaking issue — it's a behavioral one. In the case of excitement urination, helping your dog learn relaxed behaviors such as lying down or sitting quietly to greet people, can help.

You should also greet your dog calmly (and instruct visitors to do the same) to keep your dog quiet. It may also help to give your dog frequent walks and opportunities for rigorous exercise and play.

This will help him expend some of that excited energy. If you know your dog will be meeting a number of visitors, for a party at your home, for instance, let him make acquaintances outdoors so any accidents will be outdoors too.<sup>1</sup>

If your puppy displays submissive urination, he may grow out of it. Do not punish your dog for this behavior, as it is a natural method of communication for young dogs; it's their way of letting you know they're not challenging "the boss."

Punishing your dog may actually make submissive urination more frequent and likely to continue into adulthood.

In older dogs, a trainer can help you to teach confidence-building protocols such as targeting his nose to your hand during greetings (this is a more assertive behavior). A positive training class can also improve communication between you and your dog.

You can also cut down on this behavior initially by completely ignoring your dog when you arrive home, then by turning your body sideways during greetings, avoiding direct eye contact and waiting to touch him until he's settled down.

When you do kneel down to touch him, scratching him under the chin (not on top of the head or back of the neck) may help.<sup>2</sup>

## How to Remedy Housetraining Problems

- Consistency
- Positive reinforcement
- Patience

In addition, there are four primary principles that will work to teach virtually any dog the appropriate place to potty, provided you apply the three keys above. They're explained in detail in my video above but here's an overview:

- **Stay with your dog at all times** — If you leave your dog unattended, it gives him an opportunity to have an accident. For times when you can't give your full attention to your dog, let him stay in his crate. If your dog is outside the crate, I recommend you clip the leash on your belt buckle, so you can keep a keen eye on him when you're going about life.
- **Feed your dog on a schedule** — This creates a more predictable schedule for when your dog will need to go out.
- **Reward good behavior** — When your dog eliminates outdoors, immediately praise him with words (spoken in a soft, loving tone) and offer a treat within three seconds of him finishing his job.
- **Avoid punishing accidents** — Yelling at your dog for a mistake will not teach him appropriate behaviors; it will only confuse him, scare him and possibly make the problem worse.

## What to Do if Your Dog Marks Indoors

This is another behavioral issue that can be challenging to correct, but it's entirely possible. Positive reinforcement behavior training is key to stop urine marking in the house, and this is the strategy I used for my dachshund rescue Lenny — who marked the corner of every piece of furniture in our home when we first brought him home.

To reduce this totally undesirable behavior and reinforce healthy housebreaking, we put a belly band on him. We called it his loincloth (and Lenny became known as "Lenny Loincloth"). A belly band is a little diaper that holds a dog's penis to his abdomen.

Dogs innately do not want to urinate on themselves; they want to pee and mark on objects. By belly banding him, we reinforced good behavior like going potty outside and not marking in the house. I'm proud to say that in one month's time, this strategy helped him kick his marking habit for the most part. Constant positive reinforcement was really necessary with Lenny, as it is with all dogs.

## If You're Not Sure Why Your Dog Is Urinating Indoors, Have Him Checked by a Vet

There are a number of medical reasons why a dog may urinate indoors, and it's important to rule these out if your dog is urinating indoors and you're not sure why. If your dog has been housebroken her whole life then suddenly begins peeing in the house, it's safe to say there's probably a medical issue that needs to be identified and treated.

Diabetes, kidney disease, Cushing's disease, bladder infection or bladder stones can all cause urination issues, as can certain brain diseases that cause your dog to forget his housetraining skills. A trip to your veterinarian will be necessary in this case to get any necessary medical care.

If medical issues are ruled out, you can then assume the problem is largely behavioral and proceed with the appropriate positive reinforcement strategies. You may want to seek the help of a **professional** for indoor-urination issues, and please don't give up or turn to negative, fear-based punishment that usually makes the situation worse.

With the correct and consistent behavior modification, most dogs can learn to relieve themselves appropriately outdoors and in the rare cases when they cannot the use of piddle pads, pet gates and belly bands can protect your home from being soiled.

## Sources and References

[PetMD](#)

<sup>1, 2</sup> [The Whole Dog Journal February 24, 2016](#)

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