

# One of the Best Ways to Flush Toxic Wastes From Your Pet's Body

Waste removal is a major reason you should observe what's really going on with your pet. You really don't want to leave toxins hanging around to wreak their havoc on his health. Besides, this issue can make him uncomfortable. Here's what to watch for, and why.

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

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dogs and cats occasionally get constipated, and it's important to find out what's causing the problem and the best way to resolve it
- Your pet should poop at least once a day, every day. Dry, hard stools that are difficult to pass are a sign your dog or kitty is constipated
- In otherwise healthy pets, most constipation is caused by lack of adequate water and/or dietary fiber; however, there are also more serious problems that can cause or worsen the condition
- The foundational treatment for constipation in dogs and cats is offering a moisture-dense, nutritionally balanced, biologically appropriate diet
- A constant supply of fresh drinking water, daily exercise, added dietary fiber and appropriate supplements are also very important for constipated pets

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Although **diarrhea** is a more common, and much more noticeable digestive issue in pets than constipation, dogs and cats can and do get constipated. For some animals it's a once-in-blue-moon type of thing, while in others it can become habitual.

The problem with irregularity is that when stool stays in your pet's colon too long, all the moisture in it is absorbed, and it becomes dry, hard and difficult to pass. Left untreated, chronic constipation can lead to megacolon, especially in kitties. Megacolon is a terrible condition in which the large intestine stretches so much it can no longer do its job effectively.

Obviously, our goal as pet parents is to make sure our furry family members never suffer from constipation, so let's first talk about likely causes for the condition.

## What's Causing Your Pet's Constipation?

Fortunately, much of the time a pet's constipation is simply the result of inadequate water consumption or lack of dietary fiber. But sometimes the problem is more complicated, involving an obstruction inside the colon or a problem in the pelvic cavity, such as a tumor that interferes with bowel function.

For example, if your dog **swallows a big chunk of bone**, it can lodge in his bowel and cause an obstruction that prevents passage of stool. If your dog is having trouble pooping and he's been known to eat things he shouldn't, my advice is to contact your veterinarian if the situation doesn't improve in a day or two.

If you actually saw your pet swallow something that could cause an obstruction, get veterinary help right away as this situation can rapidly progress to a very serious and even fatal problem. Intact males, especially if they're older, can develop enlarged prostates that compress the bowel, creating very thin stools or even an obstruction. This problem can usually be resolved by having your pet **neutered**.

Hernias in the rectum are another obstruction that can cause constipation. The hernia bulges into the rectum, closing off passage of stool. Hernias usually require surgery to repair. Constipation can also be the result of a neuromuscular problem or a disease like hypothyroidism or hypercalcemia. Some pets have insufficient muscle tone or neuromuscular disorders that impede their body's ability to efficiently move waste through the colon.

Other causes of constipation can include infected or cancerous anal glands, or a hip or pelvic injury that makes pooping painful, the effects of surgery, certain medications, iron supplements and stress. When it comes to constipation in cats, by far the most common cause is inadequate fluid intake. Your kitty's natural prey (e.g., mice) contains 70% to 75% water, and felines are designed to get most of the water their bodies need from their diet.

Cats fed exclusively dry food are getting only a very small amount (10% to 12%) of the moisture their bodies need, and unlike dogs and other animals, they won't make up the difference at the water bowl. So these cats are chronically dehydrated, which causes constipation.

The lack of moisture causes stool in the colon to turn dry, hard and painful to pass; it also causes the kidneys to become stressed. If your cat happens to be overweight and not getting enough exercise, the problem is exacerbated. Physical activity stimulates rhythmic muscle contractions (peristalsis) in the colon, which helps move things through the GI tract.

Unfortunately, many housecats have lifestyles that involve eating too much of the wrong type of food and moving too little. Swallowing fur during grooming can further slow down transit time of waste in the colon, especially in cats fed dry diets who are also not getting adequate exercise.

## **How to Tell if Your Dog or Cat Is Constipated**

Your pet should poop at least once every single day because it's an important part of his body's natural detoxification process. Your dog or cat is constipated when he either has difficulty pooping (and the stool he produces is dry and hard), or he isn't pooping at all. This is why it's so important to keep an eye on those daily "deposits." The quantity, color, texture and smell, along with the presence of mucus or blood in your pet's feces (and urine), are all indicators of his general well-being.

Often, what passes from (or in the case of constipation, doesn't pass from) your pet's body is the first sign of a health problem, so you should regularly **monitor your dog's potty area** or your cat's litterbox and familiarize yourself with what "normal" looks like for your pet. On potty walks, constipated dogs tend to look like they're trying to go or need to go, but nothing's happening. If after a few minutes of hunching and straining your dog doesn't go or produces poop that is small, hard and dry, you can reasonably assume he's constipated.

Sometimes constipated dogs appear bloated and painful, especially when trying unsuccessfully to poop. The stool a constipated dog does manage to pass is often darker than normal and may contain mucus, blood or strange debris.

Your cat's stools should be brown, formed and soft enough that litter sticks to them. If your kitty isn't going daily or her stools are so hard and dry that litter doesn't stick to them, she could be constipated. And keep in mind most constipated cats will never show overt signs of a pooping problem.

Some kitties suffer their entire lives and their humans don't realize it because they aren't aware of the more subtle signs of chronic constipation. Left untreated, a constipated pet may begin to vomit intermittently, lose his appetite and start dropping weight. He may seem lethargic. Hopefully, the problem won't progress to this point before you take action.

## 6 Ways to Help a Problem Pooper

Assuming your pet is in otherwise good health, there are several things you can do to help resolve her constipation issues.

1. If you're feeding kibble, I strongly encourage you to switch to a moisture-rich, nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate diet. It's always the first thing I recommend, especially for dogs and cats with any sort of digestive issue. Be absolutely sure your pet's diet is nutritionally balanced. Many of the homemade recipes I've analyzed have two to three times the upper safe limits of calcium levels recommended for pets, which will lead to constipation, among many other things.
2. Make sure your pet has access to clean, fresh, filtered drinking water at all times. Place a few bowls around the house in areas your dog or cat frequents. You might also want to consider purchasing a pet water fountain to replace your cat's water bowl, since many kitties will drink more from a moving water source. If your pet isn't drinking enough, consider adding bone broth to her food to increase the moisture content in her diet.
3. Dogs and cats need to move their bodies through play and exercise. Movement also helps stool transit through the colon. Regular physical activity can help prevent or remedy constipation.
4. Add **digestive enzymes** and **probiotics** to your pet's meals. Both these supplements will help with maldigestion, which is often the cause of both occasional constipation and diarrhea.
5. If your pet lived in the wild, his natural prey would provide ample fiber in the form of fur, feathers and predigested gut contents. Needless to say, domesticated pets don't get a lot of these things in their meals! Good replacement options for your four-legged companion include:

- **Psyllium husk powder** — 1/2 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight one to two times daily on food
- **Ground dark green leafy veggies** — 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight one to two times daily with food
- **Coconut oil** — 1/2 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight one to two times daily
- **Canned 100% pumpkin** — 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight one to two times daily on food
- **Organic apple cider vinegar (ACV), raw and unfiltered** — 1/4 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight added to food one to two times daily
- **Aloe juice (not the topical gel)** — 1/4 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight one to two times daily on food

- **Acacia fiber** — 1/8 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight one to two times daily as prebiotic fiber
6. Chiropractic, acupuncture and massage therapy can also be very beneficial in helping to alleviate chronic constipation in pets.

Please note these recommendations are for dogs or cats experiencing a minor, transient bout of constipation. If your pet's condition is not resolving or seems chronic, or if you aren't sure of the cause, again, your best option is to talk with your veterinarian.

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