

Incontinence in Dogs

Some older dogs that have been housetrained for years may start having 'accidents.' As with other behavior problems in older dogs, there may be multiple causes for this change in behavior.

Medical conditions which result in an increased frequency of urination or defecation may be the underlying cause for this behavior problem. These conditions include: colitis, inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes mellitus, bladder stones or infections, inflammation of the prostate, Cushing's disease, and kidney or liver disease.



Medical conditions that cause pain or make it difficult for the dog to go outside to eliminate can also contribute to the problem. These conditions include arthritis, anal sac disease, loss of vision, and some forms of colitis. Treatment of these medical conditions may help to resolve this behavioral problem.

Some medical conditions can result in a loss of control over bladder and bowel function and include hormone responsive incontinence, prostate disease, and cognitive dysfunction. Separation anxiety may result in defecating and urinating when the dog is separated from his owner(s).

Any older dog with a house soiling problem should be examined by a veterinarian and the owner should be able to give a detailed history of the color and amount of urine (or stool) passed, the frequency at which the dog needs to eliminate, changes in eating or drinking habits, the dog's posture while eliminating, and whether the 'accidents' only occur when the owner is gone.

Medical conditions contributing to the house-soiling problem should be treated appropriately. Areas in the house where the dog has urinated or defecated should be cleaned with an enzyme cleaner. For dogs who need to urinate or defecate frequently, owners may need to change their schedules or find a pet sitter who can take the dog outside at appropriate intervals. A dog's food may contribute to difficulty defecating, and attempts should be made to determine if this could be a reason for the house soiling. Other medical conditions should be treated accordingly.

Don't give up on your older pet who is having continence problems. See the vet and work with your life-long companion to make him feel better too.