

Urinary Incontinence

Urinary incontinence is the involuntary passing of urine. There are a variety of reasons for incontinence to occur. It could involve the bladder, the urethra or brain or spinal cord problems. Incontinence is not the same as urinating inappropriately or submissive urination. In these cases the pet has control of urination.

In some situations a urinary tract infection will cause a strong urge to urinate that can seem like incontinence. So we commonly test incontinent patients for infection. If an infection is present it can be treated with antibiotics.

Pets with a partial blockage of the urethra can be incontinent since they cannot empty their bladder completely. In these pets the bladder is enlarged and can be felt upon examination. These cases usually require further workup to determine the cause of the blockage and many times surgery is needed to correct the blockage.

Hormonal-responsive incontinence most commonly occurs in female dogs that have been spayed. These pets can urinate normally but will “leak” urine when at rest. Examinations, blood and urine tests are performed but are usually normal. The cause of this type of incontinence is “weak” muscles that hold the bladder or surround the urethra. Treatment consists of medication given daily and/or weekly to strengthen the musculature around the urethra.