

# Ask A Vet: She's Not Just Being a "Bad Dog"

*Sunday, September 29, 2013*

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

My dog is suddenly having pee accidents in the house. She has been housebroken until now. What do I do to fix this?

Dear Reader,

Urinary accidents can be very frustrating, but this is not just the dog being "bad". Sudden loss of potty training is a sign that something is wrong. Is your dog leaving wet spots where she sleeps or lays down? Are the accidents very large amounts of urine or smaller amounts more often? Does the urine have an unusual odor or color? Are there other changes in your dog, such as drinking more or losing weight? Are the accidents only when you are gone or do they occur when you are home also? The answers to these questions can help your vet determine why your dog is suddenly having accidents.

Start by taking your pet to the vet for an exam. After getting some information and examining your dog, a urinalysis will likely be done to check for bacteria, infection, blood and other cells. Your vet will also check urine concentration and look for abnormal levels of glucose, protein and bilirubin, and for urinary crystals.

Most commonly, a simple bladder infection is the cause of urinary accidents. Usually a course of antibiotics will take care of it. Your vet may ask for a urine sample at the end of the antibiotics to make sure the infection is completely gone.

If the urinalysis shows other problems – too much glucose or protein, crystals, etc – other tests are needed. Blood work maybe done to check for diabetes, kidney failure, liver disease or other systemic problems. An ultrasound or x-ray of the bladder and kidneys may be needed to check for urinary stones or masses.

If the urinalysis and other tests are normal, your veterinarian will look for other reasons for your dog to be having accidents. Hormonal imbalance - seen sometimes in middle aged, spayed females - usually causes puddles or wet spots where your dog has been laying. It is important to check for other causes before saying this is the reason for your dog's accidents. Age related dementia, arthritis and other mobility problems, or neurological issues can also play a role in the onset of urinary accidents.

Occasionally, urinary accidents may truly be a behavior issue. Changes in the household routine (new job, kids starting school) or loss of a caregiver can bring on anxiety in our pets. Some dogs show this by chewing or clingy behavior, some by seeming to regress in their potty training.

When the cause of the accidents is found, your vet can treat it or help manage the issue. Until you take your pet in, consider keeping her in an easily cleaned area of the house and/or using doggy diapers to reduce messes. A good enzyme cleaner made for animal urine can help clean the spots you already have. And remember, she isn't making messes on purpose.

-Dr. Teresa Alessandri