

## **Ask the Vet: How do I know if my pet has a urinary tract infection?**

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Lower urinary tract infections, or UTIs, are fairly common in dogs and cats. Typically, bacteria from the outside environment move up the urinary tract to settle into the bladder. Females are much more commonly affected, and UTIs occur more often in dogs than cats. Some signs that your pet may have a UTI include frequent urination, straining to urinate, bloody urine, or inappropriate elimination, such as having accidents in the house or missing the litter box. Several other diseases can cause similar symptoms, so it is important to get your pet checked out and preferably test the urine to make sure that it is indeed a urinary tract infection that needs to be treated.

If a UTI is diagnosed, we will typically prescribe an antibiotic for your pet for several days. Sometimes these infections can be quite persistent and require either a longer course of antibiotics or attempting a different antibiotic. We can also send a urine sample in to a diagnostic laboratory for culturing of the bacteria and determination of which antibiotics may work best for that case. Sometimes switching to a different food, which may change the chemistry of the urine, can reduce the incidence of UTIs. Providing plenty of clean drinking water is essential to flushing the harmful bacteria out of the bladder as well.

Persistent UTIs may have an underlying cause other than a simple bacterial infection. Bladder stones, prostate issues, or various immunological problems indicate a more complicated issue that would need to be resolved before the UTI will clear up.