



**OPERATION
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Litter box problems

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It is not uncommon for cat owners to experience their cat using the bathroom outside of the litter box at some point in the cat's life. "About 10% of cats will experience litter box issues" according to the ASPCA (www.asPCA.org). Cats that have accidents outside of the litter box once or twice can develop a longer lasting problem if it isn't addressed promptly.

There are many reasons why a cat may avoid using the litter box. Some cats will urinate outside the litter box or only defecate outside the litter box, even fewer will do both outside of the box. Cats will stop using their litter box for many different reasons, here are some of the most common:

- Undiagnosed medical condition
- Litter box is located in an area that is unpleasant for the cat or is hard to get to
- Texture of the litter
- Litter box is too small
- Litter box is not clean enough for the cat
- Other cats are using their litter box
- Stress in the household

The first thing to consider when addressing litter box issues is to rule out medical causes. Cats are masters of disguise when it comes to masking symptoms of illness. If nothing else has changed in your household this could be the reason your cat is having trouble using the litter box.

Many cats are very particular about the care and maintenance of their litter box. Your litter box should be cleaned at least once per day. You should also have one litter box per cat *plus one*. Place your litter box in a quiet place away from loud appliances and heavy traffic. Your cat should not feel trapped when entering and exiting their litter box. Many cats don't like covered litter boxes but may do just fine with a litter box that has extra high sides.

If your cat is having accidents just outside the litter box it may be because the litter box is too small. The litter box should be large enough that entire cat's body can fit in the litter box without any body parts sticking out. If your litter box is large enough, your cat may not like the litter that is being used or the amount of litter being used. You can try using a different type of litter in a separate litter box to see if is the litter type.

If you are still having trouble with your cat eliminating outside the litter box you may want to contact a cat behavior specialist or trainer to help you work through this issue.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.