

UTI - Urinary Tract Infection by Linda Knilans

If you had a UTI you would know it in very short order. Frequent urination and an itching or burning sensation when urinating would have you running to your doctor. The signs in our canine friends are the same, but often can go undetected – especially if your dog has free access to the outside via a doggie door. If you walk your buddy or open a door to let your dog out, you will have a better chance of noticing if your pet is urinating small amounts very often or suddenly seems to need to go out all the time. Whining when urinating or having accidents in the house for a dog that doesn't have a house training problem is another likely indicator of a urinary tract infection.

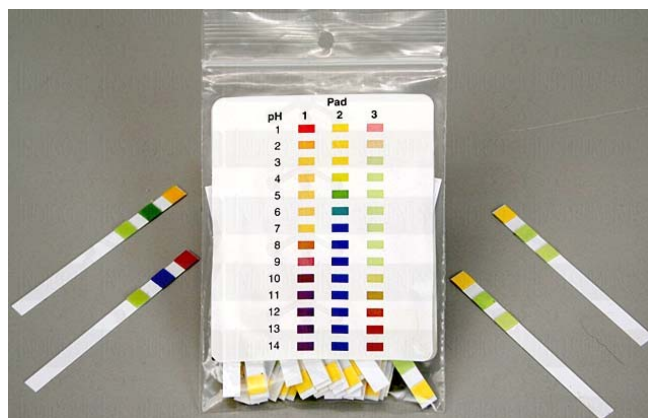
A UTI happens when bacteria gets into the urinary tract, makes itself at home in the warm moist tissues and starts to multiply out of control. The Merck Veterinary Manual states, *"Bacterial UTI is the most common infectious disease of dogs, affecting 14% of all dogs during their lifetime."* It goes on to say that left untreated, UTI's can cause other more serious problems such as struvite stones, infertility, septicemia, incontinence or eventually kidney failure.

Prevention

While this infection is common, there are some simple ways to help minimize bacteria from getting into your dog:

- Bathe and groom your dog regularly.
- If your female gets diarrhea, be sure to wash the bum area in an upward direction, away from the vulva; for your male, keep the hair around the penis clipped fairly short to prevent bacterial build-up.
- Make sure that your dog is drinking ample amounts of clean water each day; this helps dilute the concentration of the urine.
- Take your dog out every 6 – 8 hours to allow them to urinate regularly and prevent the buildup of bacteria in their bladder.
- Walk or exercise your dog regularly as this stimulates the bladder.

You can do a simple at home pH level test to give you an indicator if your dog has problem. Testing urine is inexpensive and easy. Kits with 100 pH test strips will cost you around \$10 to \$15 and can be bought at your pharmacy without a prescription. Dip the test strip in the dog's urine sample and match the colors on the bottle or box. The goal is to keep the pH level at a base of 6.5 – 7.5. If the results show either alkaline pH (over 7.5) or acidic pH (under 6.5) it would be wise to visit your vet.



Collection of the sample brings up images of trying to put a cup or a test strip under your dog as they are squatting or lifting their leg, a difficult task at best. The easiest way is to pick your dog up immediately after urination and placing the strip on her

vulva or penis in hopes of catching a drop or two. The best time to collect is first thing in the morning. This is not perfect but it is an indication of whether it is time to go your vet.