

# ◆ Stop Your Dog Drinking Urine – Action Checklist

A step-by-step guide to identifying causes and resolving the behaviour for good

Is your dog drinking their own urine? This checklist helps you identify whether the cause is medical or behavioural – and guides you through every step to stop it safely, compassionately, and for good.

Catching your dog drinking urine is alarming – but it's more common than you think. Whether your pup is a rescue, a senior, or simply picked up a bad habit, this checklist walks you from first observation to lasting resolution. Work through it in order, and always rule out medical causes first.

## 01 Observe & Document the Behaviour

Note when the behaviour occurs – daytime, nighttime, or both.

*Nighttime drinking is more often linked to incontinence, UTI, or anxiety in rescues.*

Record whose urine your dog is drinking – their own, another dog's, or both.

*Drinking another dog's urine may be the Flehmen reaction – a scent-gathering instinct, not a health issue.*

Note whether accidents are happening indoors before the drinking occurs.

*If so, your dog may be hiding evidence – a behavioural cause rather than medical.*

Check if your dog only does this when left alone for long periods.

Write down how often it happens per day/week to share with your vet.

**Note** Documentation is your most valuable diagnostic tool. Even a two-day log gives your vet crucial context.

## 02 Rule Out Medical Causes First

Check that fresh water is available at all times – in multiple locations if possible.

*Dehydration is the simplest and most common cause. Senior dogs and puppies may forget where the bowl is.*

Observe whether your dog is drinking excessively from the water bowl too (polydipsia).

*Excessive thirst alongside urine drinking strongly suggests a medical issue requiring vet attention.*

Look for signs of UTI: frequent urination, blood in urine, straining, or indoor accidents.

*UTI is common in dogs of all ages. It causes intense thirst and easy access to urine indoors.*

Check for signs of urinary incontinence: damp patches where your dog sleeps or lies down.

*Especially common in spayed females and seniors. Up to 20% of spayed females are affected.*

Note any recent medications – some drugs increase thirst as a side effect.

Consider nutritional gaps – is your dog on a complete, vet-approved diet?

*Dogs deficient in key nutrients may drink urine or eat poop as an instinctive compensatory behaviour.*

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Book a vet appointment. Request: urinalysis, bloodwork, and assessment for Cushing's syndrome or diabetes.

*Cushing's causes excessive urination and uncontrolled thirst – both key drivers of this behaviour.*

**Note** – Never skip the vet check. Even experienced dog guardians cannot reliably distinguish medical from behavioural causes without diagnostics.

## 03 Follow Through on Medical Treatment

If UTI is diagnosed, complete the full antibiotic course even if symptoms improve early.

If incontinence is diagnosed, discuss medication options (e.g. phenylpropanolamine for spayed females) with your vet.

If Cushing's syndrome or diabetes is identified, follow the prescribed management plan closely.

If nutritional deficiency is suspected, transition to a complete diet and add vet-recommended supplements.

Schedule a follow-up appointment 2–4 weeks after treatment begins to assess progress.

Ask your vet whether spay or neuter status is contributing, and discuss hormonal options if relevant.

**Note** – Medical causes almost always resolve the behaviour once properly treated. Jumping to behavioural fixes before treating the root cause is rarely effective.

## 04 Remove Access to Urine Immediately

Clean all indoor urine accidents immediately with an enzymatic cleaner – not bleach.

*Standard cleaners mask scent to humans but not dogs. Enzymatic cleaners fully break down urine compounds.*

Increase the frequency of outdoor toilet breaks to reduce indoor accidents.

*A dog that goes outside more often has fewer opportunities to drink urine indoors.*

If your dog is outdoors, clean up urine spots in the yard regularly.

*This is especially important for multi-dog households where your dog may be drawn to another dog's urine.*

Use a belly band or dog nappy for incontinent dogs to reduce urine availability overnight.

Supervise your dog indoors until the behaviour is under control.

**Note** – You cannot retrain a behaviour your dog still has easy access to. Removal of opportunity is the foundation of all behavioural change.

## 05 Behavioural Retraining with Positive Reinforcement

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When you catch your dog approaching urine, calmly redirect with a command ('leave it') and reward compliance.

*Never scold or punish. Punishment teaches dogs to hide the behaviour – not to stop it.*

Practise the 'leave it' command daily in low-distraction environments before applying it to urine.

*Build a strong foundation with low-stakes rewards before expecting it to work on high-value targets.*

Reward your dog generously every time they walk away from urine without prompting.

If your dog is drinking another dog's urine, separate toilet areas or clean up immediately after each dog.

For dogs raised in puppy mills or with a history of abuse, work with a certified positive reinforcement trainer.

*These dogs have deep-seated survival habits. Professional support is not optional – it's compassionate.*

Avoid any punishment-based methods. They reliably worsen anxiety-driven urine drinking.

**Note** – Positive reinforcement is the only approach Dr. Shruti recommends. Punishment-based methods create shame, anxiety, and more hidden accidents – not less.

## 06 Optimise Environment & Daily Routine

Ensure fresh water is available in at least two locations, and refill bowls before bedtime.

*For dogs who drink urine overnight, a full water bowl before bed is often the simplest fix.*

Increase daily physical exercise appropriate for your dog's age and breed.

Provide regular mental stimulation: puzzle feeders, training sessions, scent games.

*Boredom and anxiety are significant drivers of repetitive behaviours including urine drinking.*

If your dog is alone for long hours, arrange a dog walker or sitter for midday breaks.

Establish a consistent daily toilet schedule – same times, same route if possible.

Address any underlying separation anxiety with a certified behaviourist if present.

*Rescue dogs especially may drink urine as an anxiety-coping or evidence-hiding strategy.*

**Note** – Routine is deeply calming for dogs. A predictable day reduces the anxiety that underlies many compulsive behaviours.

## 07 Monitor Progress & Maintain Gains

Keep a simple log for 2–4 weeks: date, time, context, and what stopped the behaviour.

Track water intake – note if it normalises after medical treatment begins.

If the behaviour persists beyond 4 weeks of consistent intervention, return to your vet.

*Persistent cases may indicate an undiagnosed medical condition or deeper behavioural root.*

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If behaviour resolves but returns seasonally or after life changes (new pet, move, etc.), revisit stress factors.

Celebrate small wins – every day without the behaviour is progress worth acknowledging.

**Note** – Lasting change is gradual. Most guardians see meaningful improvement within 2–4 weeks when medical causes are treated and routines are consistent.

## Call Your Vet Urgently If You Notice:

<b>Blood in urine</b>	This always warrants same-day veterinary attention.
<b>Straining to urinate</b>	May indicate a blockage – a potentially life-threatening emergency in male dogs.
<b>Extreme lethargy</b>	Sudden weakness alongside abnormal drinking behaviour suggests systemic illness.
<b>Vomiting or weight loss</b>	Combined with urine drinking, this may indicate kidney disease or diabetes.

*“Your dog is not doing this to be naughty. They are communicating a need – and it is your attention, not your frustration, that will help them heal.”*

– Dr. Shruti Bhattacharya

For the full guide, visit [thehappypuppers.com](http://thehappypuppers.com) and read *Do Dogs Drink Urine at Night? 2026 Causes + Fast Fixes*.