

## My Cat Is Going Outside the Litterbox

**CatChannel** veterinary expert **Arnold Plotnick, DVM**, offers some reasons for cat's elimination issue.

*By Arnold Plotnick, DVM*

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**Q:** I have two 10-month-old Siamese kittens, a brother and sister. About two weeks ago, the little girl started to poop on the floor instead of in her litterbox on occasion, maybe two times a week. I have also noticed that she is scooting her behind on the floor and sometimes when she is on my lap. Her litterbox is always clean. About a month ago she started having soft stool over a weekend so I took her to an ER vet. They did tests, but could not find anything, so we changed her food. We give them very high-quality food. The soft stool soon went away, but now this problem has started up. Could you give me some advice on this matter?

**A:** When cats defecate outside their litterbox, it is usually a litterbox cleanliness issue. I don't think this is the situation in your case, however, because you say that the litterbox is always clean. Occasionally, cats will get stool stuck to the fur around their anus, and this stool will drop off the fur in an inappropriate place. Whether or not this is happening with your cat is difficult to say.

The fact that your cat scoots her behind on the floor and when she is on your lap suggests that there is a problem involving her anal area. Cats have two small glands just inside their anus, called anal glands or anal sacs. These can fill up with material and become impacted, causing your cat discomfort, which can manifest as scooting. Cats with diarrhea will sometimes get soft stool adhering to the fur around their anus, and they scoot in an attempt to wipe it off. Your cat did have diarrhea, but according to your letter, the diarrhea has resolved, so this is probably not the case.

Whenever an elimination problem develops in the house, whether it is urine or feces, a good idea would be to add a litterbox to the household. The magic number is "n + 1", meaning that you should have one more litterbox than there are cats in the household. So, theoretically, you should have three litterboxes. If that is too much for you, at least add a second box. The new box should be in a low traffic area, and should be uncovered (no hood). Cats prefer clumping cat litter, so switch to this if you're not already using it. Discard feces and urine clumps daily, or even twice a day. This usually solves the problem of inappropriate defecation.