



Tips for Expressing a Dog's Bladder

There is no substitute for good veterinary care.

This information is for educational purposes only and should NOT be used in place of consultation with your veterinarian.

If you are here reading about tips to help with expressing your dog's bladder, then either you are learning in order to be prepared ahead of time, or your dog has lost bladder control due to the disc episode and you need to express its bladder while their body heals. If you haven't already read it, please read our article on bladder control because it will explain how to figure out if your dog does or does not have bladder control and why it is important to express your dog's bladder if it does not have bladder control. Here is the link:

<https://sites.google.com/site/k9backpack/ivdd-documents/bladder-control>

YES, YOU CAN! BEFORE MOVING ON: TAKE A BIG BREATH AND REPEAT: "I CAN DO THIS!" BELIEVE!!!

We know expressing seems like a very scary thing – pressing on a dog's bladder in their belly! **Don't worry!!** You don't need to be a rocket scientist or a medical student to do it. You just need to believe **YOU CAN DO IT** and keep trying. Your vet and vet techs are there to help you too, so please don't feel bad about going back to the vet for more demonstrations. (Many of us have had to go back again and again!!)

WHAT TO DO FIRST?

Get a demonstration at the vet clinic. The best way is for the vet or vet tech to put their hands over yours and guide yours to find the bladder and show you the appropriate amount of pressure to apply. Watching them do it does not allow you to feel what the bladder feels like or feel how much pressure it should take to make the bladder release urine.

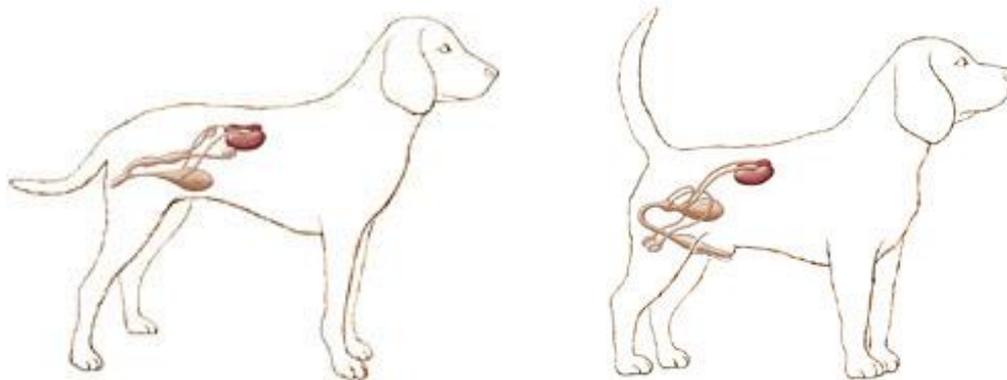
Before getting the demo, offer your dog a 1/3 of a cup of low-sodium broth diluted with more water. Then wait about an hour to hour and a half before the demo so that the liquid has enough time to be processed and make its way down to fill up the bladder. Learning on a full bladder which takes up more space in the abdomen is much easier than trying to feel around for something that is smaller, like the size of a walnut.



WHERE IS THE BLADDER?

The bladder is like a balloon that is not quite round and not quite oval shaped and is about the size of a lime. Its size and shape depend on how much urine it is holding. It is located in the abdomen behind their belly button.

In a male, the bladder is above the middle of the dog's penis. In a female, it is a little more toward the dog's rear end. Here are two pictures to help you visualize where the bladders are:



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Female Reproductive and Urinary System

Male Reproductive and Urinary System

Illustrations used with permission by john@yesko.com **John Yesko** Chicago, Illinois USA

<http://www.yesko.com/stock-medical-veterinary-illustration.htm>

WATCH THIS VIDEO

This video not only helps you understand how to locate your dog's bladder but the different techniques that may work best for you and your dog. http://www.scoutshouse.com/videos/video_bladder.html

WHERE TO EXPRESS – OUTSIDE OR INSIDE?

While you are learning to express and it is something new for both you and your dog, outside may not be the best place to express your dog's bladder because there are all sorts of distractions like flying leaves, squirrels, lizards, birds, the dog next door, or even your other dogs. Plus, outside the weather may not be nice at all - raining or snowing with the wind howling. The advantage of expressing inside is the lack of too many outside distractions to make the process more complicated by having a squirmy dog who wants to go on a sniff fest or chase that lizard or squirrel along with



staying warm or cool and dry inside. If you do choose to express your dog's bladder outside because your dog is more comfortable there or your dog can start urinating but not finish so you need to express more, then it is best to take your dog out all by itself rather than allowing all dogs in the family out at the same time.

Once again, while you are learning to express, if you have other dogs in the family, it will be best to select a place where you can have privacy with the dog needing to be expressed. Other dogs will want to sniff and investigate to see what is going on which may make your dog needing to be expressed nervous and fidgety. You want a very calm environment with no distractions until you get more experienced and you and your dog are more accustomed to the process.

Options for an expressing station inside your home:

In the shower or tub: you will need a non-slip tub/shower mat, human pee pads, unscented baby or flushable wipes, and preferably a small stool or step ladder to sit on. Place the tub/shower mat in the bottom and put the pee pads on top of the tub mat. Place the stool or step ladder behind that so you can sit down to express. Get in and put your dog on top of the pee pads. If convenient for you, sit down on the stool or step ladder. You can also lay your dog on its side and express from that position instead. Whichever position is best for you and your dog.

On the floor in a room away from other dogs: you will need some towels, human pee pads, unscented baby or flushable wipes, and a stool or small step ladder if convenient for you. Place towels down and human pee pads on top and then place your dog on the pee pads.

WHICH POSITION?

Whichever position is best for you and your dog is what you want to use. If your dog cannot stand at all, then laying on its side may be easiest. Try them all and see what works best for you.

Options:

- Standing up
- Standing up with support from you or someone helping
- Laying on its side
- Over the toilet (is not appropriate for a dog in conservative treatment or in recovery from surgery)



ASK FOR HELP

At first, you may find it helpful to have someone help you to support your dog or keep your dog calm. So, ask someone in your family or a friend if they can help.

HOW TO EXPRESS

If you are able to support your dog in the standing position, place your hands on each side of your dog's abdomen and locate the bladder by feeling with your fingers. If your dog is lying down, put one hand under their belly and the other on top. Search for what feels like a full balloon that is lime shaped. The fuller the bladder is, the more space it will take up in the abdomen. To express the bladder itself, you can use your finger tips or your fingers curled up. Slowly apply steady pressure until you get a steady stream of urine. Keep applying pressure until the urine just dribbles or stops and you can almost feel your fingers from each hand touching each other. Then wait approximately 30 seconds to a minute to let the bladder reform and reshape which it will do, and then try to express again to get the remaining urine out. Getting the last of the urine out will help reduce the chance of your dog developing a urinary tract infection.

It is important for you to be calm while you express. If you are tense and anxious, your dog will sense that and will be tense and anxious too. If your dog is tense and anxious, it may tense up its stomach muscles making it harder for you to express. You can gently massage your dog's stomach or even apply a nice warm towel from the dryer to its stomach and let it stay there for a few minutes before expressing which will help the muscles to relax.

HOW OFTEN TO EXPRESS

If your dog is taking steroids such as Dexamethasone, Prednisone, or Prednisolone, you will need to express perhaps every 2 to 3 hours because these medications increase your dog's need to urinate. It may be that you have to express every hour and 1/2 while on steroids. Once the steroid is stopped, then expressing every 4 to 6 hours may be often enough. Many vets recommend not going more than 8 hours without expressing in order not to stretch out the bladder too much and not allow urine to sit in the bladder too long which can lead to urinary tract infections. The usual recommendation is to express at least every 6 hours. If your dog is not taking a steroid, you may not need to get up in the middle of the night to express its bladder since a dog's body does not produce as much urine during the night. If you express right before you go to bed and then immediately when you get up (but not longer than 8 hours), your dog's



bladder may not overflow. Each dog is different so you will need to adjust the expressing schedule to your dog's bladder capability to hold urine.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

When we take our dogs out for a potty break, we usually say: "Go potty!" Or "Go Pee Pee!" We say it in an encouraging and calm voice. When expressing, come up with a similar phrase such as "Let's help you pee pee!" or "Time to pee pee!" Use it every time you get ready to express and it will help establish a routine your dog becomes accustomed to.

Keep a log of each time you express so if you don't remember how long it has been since you expressed, you can check the log and easily find out.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY DOG IS REGAINING BLADDER CONTROL?

When a dog starts to regain bladder control, they will resist your attempts to express by tightening their stomach muscles. What you want to do is the "sniff-and-pee" test which is the gold-standard test to see if your dog has bladder control. If your dog can sniff an old, favorite potty area and then start to pee, then you know that the brain and bladder were able to talk to each other and bladder control is returning. (A perfect reason for a big celebration!!!)

HOW TO DO THE "SNIFF-AND-PEE" TEST

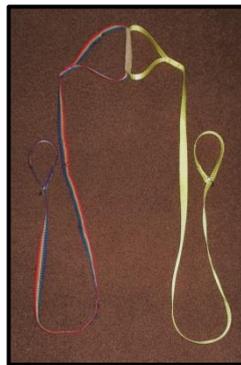
Make sure and give your dog about 1/4 to 1/3 cup of water or low-sodium broth diluted with water about an hour or an hour and a half before trying the sniff-and-pee test. Carry your dog out and carefully place them down in a favorite potty area.





If your dog can walk, limit its movement by using a harness and a 6-foot leash. If your dog gets too excited seeing the harness and leash, set up a designated potty area with either an ex-pen or some inexpensive garden fencing that sticks into the ground to build about a 6-foot area.

If your dog cannot walk, slip a sling under his/her belly close to the rear legs. A sling can be a men's neck tie, a rolled-up woman's scarf, or a very thin and narrow piece of sheet or inexpensive fleece blanket you cut up. It doesn't have to be fashionable – just functional. Males seem to tolerate a figure-8 sling better since it does not cover their maleness as much as some of the other options. A figure-8 sling can be made out of 2 inexpensive leashes joined by vet wrap or an ACE bandage. Here is an example:



Legs go through the figure 8 made by the two handles joined by the ACE bandage in the middle.

You want it long enough so that you can stand straight up and not have to bend over which will help save your back while supporting his or hers. Hold the sling taut enough so that his/her back is straight and level. Don't jack up the rear end like a wheel barrel. Your dog will be able to move using his/her front legs with you supporting the rear end with the sling.



Let your dog sniff around in the favorite potty area and wait and see if he/she can start to pee. If so, your dog has bladder control. If your dog looks around like "Ho Hum. Are we done yet?" then take him/her back in and try again in about an hour. Carry them back out and repeat the sniff-and-pee test.



If your dog can start to urinate, immediately do the "HAPPY PEE PEE" DANCE, hug and kiss your sweet dog, and then try to express any more urine out of its bladder. Usually when they begin to regain bladder control, they can start to urinate but can't squeeze all of the urine completely out of the bladder so some urine sits in the bladder which can cause a UTI to develop. So until more healing takes place and your dog regains more control, please go ahead and try to express any more urine out after they finish what they can do.

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED: TRY, TRY AGAIN!"

Expressing takes practice and more practice. **But remember, YOU CAN DO IT!! Don't get discouraged.** Watch that video as many times as you need to. Expressing is a new skill and it will take a few days to get better at it. Don't hesitate to go back to the vet for as many demos as you feel you need. Within a week, you'll be pro!!

WHAT COULD IT BE?

- Is your dog hard to express or dribbling urine often?
- Is their urine dark in color or have a strong odor?
- Is there blood in the urine or blood coming out of the genitals?
- Is your dog licking their genital area more than normal?
- Does your dog cry or seem to be in pain when you express?

If you answered YES to any of those questions, then your dog may have a urinary tract infection (UTI) and you need to either take a urine sample in or take your dog to the vet for treatment. UTIs can turn serious quickly in a dog so you'll want to get treatment as soon as possible. If there is any blood or your dog is in pain when you express, please get vet treatment immediately.

Additional Information

<http://www.handicappedpets.com/pet-care-articles/pet-bowel-a-urinary/20-how-to-express-your-pets-bladder.html>

<http://www.handicappedpets.com/how-to-express-your-dogs-bladder.html>

<http://dreamdachshundrescue.wordpress.com/2006/12/06/whats-it-like-to-express-a-dogs-bladder/>