

Urinalysis is an important diagnostic tool that your veterinarian uses to detect and manage many serious diseases and potentially hidden problems in your pet.

A relatively inexpensive test, it can provide valuable information to your veterinarian about a host of potential health issues.

What you need to know about urinalysis:

- **Urinalysis is an important part of your pet's annual exam**, even for healthy animals, because it helps spot problems that may not otherwise be visible.
- **It's especially critical when kidney disease is suspected.** Urinary tract infections can also be detected with this procedure (in some cases, a culture test is required).
- **This test can also help detect or rule out other diseases**, such as diabetes mellitus and other endocrine disorders, liver disease and cancer.



Q & A

My pet is straining to urinate. What should I do?

Anytime your pet seems to be having difficulty urinating, he or she should **see a veterinarian right away**. Your pet may be suffering from a urinary tract infection or a partially or completely blocked urinary tract. This condition can be extremely painful, and be a potentially life threatening medical emergency, especially in cats.

How often should my pet have a urinalysis performed?

Urinalysis should be performed as part of your pet's annual examination, especially once your pet has entered his or her senior years.

How do I collect a urine sample?

You don't! Unlike fecal samples, which you can fairly easily obtain, your veterinarian collects your pet's urine sample at the hospital. This is done through free catch, catheterization or cystocentesis (drawing directly from the bladder).

Urinalysis

An important way we identify health problems



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Urinalysis

Such measures can help make the urine collection process go much more quickly. If your pet arrives at the hospital with an empty bladder, it may be necessary to keep him or her for 2 to 24 hours to allow the bladder to fill enough to ensure adequate urine collection.

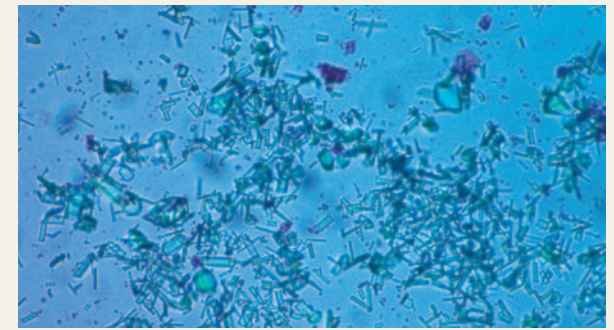
What we test during a urinalysis

There are many ways your veterinarian can obtain useful information about your pet's health through a urinalysis:

- **Simply looking at the sample.** For example, normal urine is amber colored and clear. Color irregularities or cloudiness in your pet's urine sample can indicate the presence of blood in the urine or other abnormalities.
- **A specific gravity test** helps determine how well your pet's kidneys are functioning and whether your pet is dehydrated or is excreting too much water.
- **Chemical test strips** can detect the presence of blood, protein, glucose, or other substances.
- **A microscopic examination** allows your veterinarian to look for blood cells, bacteria, and crystals. Crystal formation can be associated with urinary tract inflammation and infection that can lead to blockages, especially in male cats. Urinalysis can help determine which type of crystals are present in order to develop the most effective treatment plan for your pet.

VCA Pet Tip:

A urine culture should be done routinely every 6 months on older dogs and cats that have kidney disease, because it is not uncommon for these animals to have a "silent" urinary tract infection. It is always best to diagnose an infection as early as possible.



These struvite crystals, detected via a urinalysis, signal a urinary tract infection.

When should urinalysis be performed?

During your pet's annual exam, and whenever your pet shows these symptoms

- Blood in the urine
- Discolored urine
- Urine with an unusual or strong odor
- Licking at urinary tract openings
- Frequent urination (either large or small amounts)
- Straining to urinate
- Drinking excess water
- In some cases, when vomiting or diarrhea is present.

Two danger signs:

1. If your pet is straining to urinate, it could be a sign of a urinary infection. Bring your pet to a veterinary hospital without delay, as this can be a serious and potentially life threatening condition.
2. Blood in your pet's urine is also cause for serious concern. Blood can be a sign of urinary tract infection, inflammation, bladder stones, or cancer (in older dogs). In some animals, it can indicate a blood-clotting problem, while in older animals it can be a warning sign of kidney or bladder cancer.

A vital aid in detecting and treating illnesses

Urinalysis helps us detect and treat health problems, often before they become serious. That's why VCA recommends a urinalysis as part of your pet's annual physical examination.

A urinalysis may also be recommended when results of an X-ray, blood test or physical exam indicate a potential problem or abnormality with your pet's urinary system.

How urine samples are collected

It is best to allow your veterinarian to collect a clean urine sample while your pet is at the hospital.

Your veterinarian can employ techniques that will allow collection of a sterile sample from your pet.

You can help, however, by discouraging your dog from urinating 3 to 4 hours prior to your appointment time.

To avoid any unintended urination during the trip to the hospital, carry small pets from your house to the car to the hospital and walk larger dogs briskly to discourage them from urinating outside.