

# Little Boys (and sometimes little girls)

## Who Lift Their Leg Indoors

Written by Beth Widdows

This is such a common complaint, it seems there is a need to address it in a single place. There can be more than one reason for this happening and, probably an attempt to determine this reason is a good place to start.

The first thing to do in all cases, is to determine if there is a medical reason for the problem. This is more likely to be true if the problem starts suddenly when it hadn't occurred before but can also sometimes be true if it has been an ongoing problem. Have your vet do a general check but also make sure a specific check is done for a Urinary Track Infection (UTI) or bladder infection. We find sometimes the vet says the dog is fine but there really is a problem there. It may be that they are checking at the wrong point. If you didn't bring in a sample and the vet "takes" a sample directly from the bladder with a needle, he can miss an infection occurring further down. Sometimes it is a low-level chronic infection that just seems to be missed. It is often beneficial to put the dog on a round of antibiotics such as Clavamox just to 'be sure'.

Is the dog 'marking' or 'urinating'? If the spot is larger than a silver dollar, chances are that the dog is giving in to the urge to urinate rather than simply marking. This is a sure sign that the dog needs to be retrained. Retraining using a crate, pen or secured area for an adult dog is something that we humans seem to find very hard to do. But it is necessary to resolve the problem. People who do this usually find the problem has gone within a month or so. It also often resolves the marking problems. If you aren't sure which is happening, just try it and I'll bet it gives good results. See the article [House Training](#) for basic information. Remember that if you are training or retraining an adult dog, you must go back to Square One and treat the dog as though it were a puppy being trained. You must take the dog outside far more often than seems necessary. And you must stay outside with the dog for long periods of time, even 20 minutes or so. You want to get that dog outside and stay 'ahead of the accident'. Follow the puppy training rules but because the dog is an adult, the periods can be extended. Here are some guidelines:

After nap or rest period: directly outside

When playing, every 20-30 minutes, take him/her outside

After drinking water, outside in 15 minutes

During the day, if the dog is crated, keep the crate in the room with you and not a separate area. He still needs to be part of the 'pack'.

A very important element here is supervision. If you are not able to watch the dog directly, the dog goes into the crate or dog-secured area. (When the dog is in the crate, pen or secured area, you are simply protecting your house and not actually doing training. The training occurs when the dog is free and you are watching him.) Watching the dog does not mean letting him play while you read email or the newspaper. It means actually 'watching' the dog. If, during play periods, he lifts the leg and is not caught, it means that you were not watching and it is your fault not his. So, if you are not actually watching, put the dog in the crate, pen or dog-secured area.

While the dog is having a play period and you are watching the dog, you must be ready to correct the moment the dog starts getting ready to lift. Watch for sniffing and circling actions. Be ready to stop the dog immediately upon the move to the furniture and the sniff (before the leg lifts!). You can startle him with your voice. (Use a sound like 'Eehhh, Eehhh') This is what most people do. You can also use a [shake can](#). If your dog has any hearing loss you may need to use the shake can or you may actually have to use hand signals and in this case, touch the dog on the leg. The moment he stops, you praise and take the dog outside. Note: If using a shake can, keep a can in every room in the house. PLEASE NOTE: It is not appropriate to yell at the dog, hit the dog, or otherwise punish the dog. This will cause the problem to become worse. You must get the dog's attention, take him outside and praise all the good behaviors. If you reward the dog with a treat, do this outside and not when he returns inside. If you give it to him inside, he will get the message that the treat is for coming inside. It will miss the point entirely. Please note in the housetraining article the use of a potty pen. This makes it very clear to the dog exactly why he is outside....not to play but to potty.

#### Cleaning up Spots

This is critical. If a dog marks in a spot, he will return to that spot because he will continue to smell the odor even after you have cleaned. It is important that you use a product that will eliminate the odor. Try Nature's Miracle. But follow the directions carefully. For new and existing stains, wet it with NM and let it set for 5-10 minutes. Use a dry towel to scrub the spot. Then resaturate the area. Set the

damp cloth on it covered by the dry cloth and leave it there for 4-7 days!! Block this area during this period so the dog can't get at it. If you cheat and do less than this, the odor will return and so will the dog!

#### Other Aids to consider

Some dogs that are truly incontinent do benefit from the use of PPA (phenylpropanolomine). Many have reported good results with this. (Consult your vet)

For a male, consider one shot of female hormones while you are attempting to 'break the pattern'. This is not something to be repeated but it may lessen the 'urge' during the training period. (Consult your vet)

Consider a more homeopathic method such as feeding black licorice. This is supposed to reduce the hormones also. (Check with your vet or homeopathic practitioner)

Bellybands. This is a cloth band that is wrapped around the middle of the boy dog. (For girls you can buy panties). It is usually secured with Velcro. Inside the band is a lady's incontinence pad. For the incontinent dog or the dog that tends to forget himself, this can be a real lifesaver. Many dogs will lift while wearing one of these and then find that they are forced to stay in a wet environment afterwards. (Don't change it immediately but also don't leave him in this wet too long; you don't want to encourage an environment that could allow germs to thrive.) The bellyband begins to act as a reminder to the dog and often, eventually you will begin to find that the dog stays dry while wearing this. It is great for a dog who does quite well but occasionally forgets. If you are tempted to not crate him while you run to the store...this is a way to not come home to accidents. Do a web search to find places to buy them....some stores call them 'doggie wraps'. Just be very careful about your use of the band. While the dog is in the training period, you may be tempted to use this while you can't watch the dog. That is not a good solution. You are not being consistent. If you use this during the training period, you must still be watchful and catch the dog when he lifts his leg even if he is wearing a band. If the band helps you relax, that is great but if it makes you relax so much that you miss the marking occasions, then stop using it during training. It is meant to save your furniture but the training isn't going to work if you don't continue to be

vigilant.

Remember that no one wants a dog that isn't reliable in the house. The longer you let this problem go on, the more firmly set the dog's mind will be in believing that this is acceptable behavior. If you do not break the habit and you someday are unable to care for your dog, you will find it almost impossible to find another good home for him. He will, most likely, end up being put down. So it is crucial that you work through this problem right now. If the training isn't completed in one month, then continue it for two months and so on. Consistency is the most important key to fixing this situation. If you aren't consistent in the training, you will never resolve it. And consistency means that every member of the family handle the problem in the same way.

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