

PEE PLEASE!

How to collect a urine sample from your cat

(and live to tell about it)

It's something your cat does every day (with luck, in the litterbox). And when you're cleaning the litterbox, it's hard to imagine anyone wanting the products you find inside. But your veterinarian does. He or she really does.

Why? Veterinarians often want to check a urine sample, even if your pet isn't experiencing any urinary issues. A urine sample can also help diagnose diseases such as kidney failure and diabetes.

So when your pet's doctor kindly asks you for a sprinkle of your cat's tinkle—often called a free-catch urine sample—how exactly do you make that happen?

Here are a few tips to make panning for that liquid gold a little easier.

1. Prepare your cat to help ensure a full urinary bladder

Because your cat is used to using the litterbox on her own, it's difficult to assess how full your cat's bladder really is. You can prepare your cat by isolating her in a small room, such as a bathroom, with food and water but no litterbox. Using a room such as a bathroom will make clean up easier if she goes before you add in the litterbox. Don't leave your cat without a litterbox for an entire day, because this can actually cause urinary issues if she refuses to go without one.

2. Add in a litterbox that is free of absorbent materials

Many cats will refuse to urinate until you give them a litterbox, so after a few hours you can put one in the room with your kitty. To prepare the litterbox to catch your kitty's precious sample, consider these options. You can simply use an empty litterbox, but some cats will refuse to use a litterbox with nothing inside to cover their urine. If your cat refuses to use an empty litterbox, you can use shredded plastic bag pieces. Your cat will be able to feel like she's diligently burying her piddle, but the sample will remain unabsorbed inside. There are also a few types of commercially available nonabsorbent litter that have a texture closer to traditional litter.

3. Bring the sample to your vet ASAP

Congrats! Your cat has made a very important deposit in her litterbox. What's next? It's time to transfer your urine sample to a sealable plastic container. Veterinary offices typically dispose of the containers

after use, so use a container that you don't need returned to you. (That means no using grandma's favorite crystal!)

Urine tends to crystallize if you leave it out, which may change the urinalysis results. To avoid contamination or false readings, bring the sample to your veterinary hospital as soon as you can. If you can't bring the sample in directly, place it in the refrigerator until you're ready to bring it in. (Just label it, please. You don't want it to get confused with the leftover chicken broth or last week's lemonade.) When you drive your cat's sample to the hospital, place it in a cooler with an icepack.

And voila! You're a free-catch urine sample hero. (And you still possess all 10 fingers and toes.)

