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## Preventing Litterbox Problems

Most cats have a specific preference about their litter and where their litter box should be located. **For any sudden changes in elimination habits, we recommend reaching out immediately to your primary veterinarian.**

### Location

Place the litter box in a location where your cat can easily access but also will not be disturbed by other members of the family. If the litter box is placed in a closet or bathroom, be sure the door is wedged open from both sides, to prevent your cat from being trapped inside or out.

### Type of Litter

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litter. The scoop-able and dust free clay litters are good options. Many cats may find the odor of scented or deodorant litter aversive. Frequent cleaning (typically daily) is the best way to manage unwanted odors and increase the likelihood that your cat will consistently use it.

### Number of Litter Boxes

There should be at least one more litter box more than the number of cats in the household. That way, none of the cats will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied. Place the litter boxes in several locations around the house to provide easy access. For multi-level homes, provide one litter box on each level.

### To Cover or Not to Cover

Generally, cats prefer uncovered boxes. Some cats in multi-cat households may be ambushed by other cats when they come out of the litter box. This may cause them to avoid the litter box in the future.

### Size and Type

Most commercially sold litter boxes may not be large enough for your cat. Your litter box should be 1½ times the length of your cat. If you cannot find a large enough box at a pet store, a low plastic storage bin is a great alternative. They come in a variety of sizes. Most cats prefer 2 - 4 inches of litter. Do not use a plastic liner in the litter box.

We don't recommend self-cleaning boxes, as the noise and movement may scare cats, causing them to eliminate elsewhere.

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## If Problems Develop

We never want to punish an animal for inappropriate elimination as this adds stress and fear and will likely worsen the problem. If your cat begins to eliminate in areas other than the litter box, **the first call should be to a veterinarian.**

Many medical conditions can cause a change in a cat's litter box habits. Cats are very good and hiding pain and sometimes changes in elimination may be the only sign of illness. If the veterinarian determines your cat is healthy, and you offered the ideal litterbox set up, the cause may be due to an underlying behavioral issue. At that point, we recommend reaching out to a certified behaviorist or veterinary behaviorist. Joybound Behavior Specialty Service can help you and your cat. Please contact us **trainer@joybound.org** for more information!