Is Your Litter Box Causing Stress?

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If your feline friend has recently started eliminating outside of her litter box, you're likely wondering why. Inappropriate elimination (urinating or defecating outside of the litter box) can occur at any age. One or more of the following may be the problem:

- **Medical conditions**
  Take your cat to the veterinarian first to rule out a medical condition. Several medical conditions cause pain during elimination or an increased need to urinate or defecate. These conditions include colitis, inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes mellitus, hyperthyroidism, kidney or liver disease, and feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD).

- **Stress**
  Cats are extremely sensitive to stressors such as moving and changes in routine. Reduce these and other stressors whenever possible.

- **Litter box location**
  Make sure your cat's litter box is easily accessible - ground level is ideal. Also, make sure her litter box is placed in a private, quiet, pleasant area. A dark, damp basement is not the place for a litter box.

- **Too few litter boxes**
  Most cats don't appreciate having to share a litter box, regardless of whether it's fresh or filthy. We always recommend at least one litter box per cat - more if your cat is fussy.

- **Litter box cleanliness**
  Your fastidious feline will go out of her way to avoid a full box - even if it means eliminating where she knows she shouldn't. Change the litter frequently. If you're using a plastic pan, replace it periodically; it eventually absorbs urine odors. Try a self-cleaning automatic litter box - it's a great time saver for you!

- **Litter texture, feel or smell**
  Sometimes the litter itself is unappealing to your cat. You may need to experiment with several types until you find an acceptable litter. Never punish your cat for eliminating inappropriately - this will increase her stress and worsen the situation. She likely has a good reason you haven't yet recognized. To prevent inappropriate elimination, keep your cat's litter box clean, fresh, private, and easily accessible whenever possible.

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