

FEMALE URINARY INCONTINENCE

Symptoms

- Involuntary Leaking of Urine
- Wet bedding after waking up
- Urine spot on floor after getting up
- Vulva area constantly wet

Although Urinary Incontinence (UI) is a non-life threatening condition, it is resulting in Swissy owners surrendering their dog to rescue, non-kill shelters, and shelters that euthanize dogs. UI is defined as involuntary urination, and most often presents in Swissies as leaking of urine while sleeping.

In the dog world in general approximately 20% will be incontinent and most incontinence will be found in geriatric dogs since our dogs are living longer and healthier lives. Based on anecdotal evidence from Swissy breeders and owners, the percentage of incontinence in Swissies is much higher, and can occur anytime after a female is spayed. Additionally, it is not uncommon for Swissy female puppies to experience periods of incontinence during their peak growth periods prior to being spayed. Incontinence is occasionally found in Swissy males as well, but the incidence is much lower. All Swissy owners need to be aware of this condition so that early treatment can be started.

Incontinence can occur for many reasons, such as a weak bladder sphincter (generally the most common in Swissies), urinary tract infection (UTI), excessive water consumption, congenital structural defects and spinal cord disease. Swissy owners should have their Swissy examined by a veterinarian to determine the possible cause of their incontinence. When additional symptoms such as frequent urination, blood in the urine, unsuccessful attempts to urinate are seen then a UTI is likely. UTIs are common across all breeds of dogs and can be treated and most often cured through the use of antibiotics.

There are two health reasons to spay a female (other than unwanted puppies). The first is that it reduces the risk of mammary tumors/cancer. If spayed before the first heat cycle, the risk of mammary tumors is less than 1%. If spayed between the first and second heat cycle, the risk becomes about 8%. If spayed after the second heat cycle, the

risk goes up to 25%. The second reason to spay a female is to eliminate the possibility of Pyometra, which is a life threatening abscess of the uterus that is not always easy to diagnose, depending on whether the Pyometra is open or closed.

UI caused by a weak bladder sphincter can usually be controlled with relatively inexpensive medications, such as Phenylpropanolamine (PPA), diethylstilbestrol (DES), Incurin (estriol) obtained through consultation with your veterinarian. This condition, due to a large percentage of affected females, has its unique problems in the Swissy breed, but with education and the medications available, Swissies with UI can easily be forever members of their families.