

# Health Effects From Breathing Cat Urine

By Cheryl Card

## Instructions

- **Step 1:**



- You love your pet, but with pets come accidents or bad habits. Pet stains can be difficult to remove. Worse than the stains are the odors that may accompany them. Cat urine has a particularly strong smell. You are concerned about fumes and pollutants in the air, and worry about the health effects of inhaling air with a strong, unpleasant smell.

## Degree of Odor

- **Step 1:**

If you pass a litter box which has just been used, you probably will not even notice a urine smell. Kitty litters do a good job of absorbing urine and neutralizing odors. If the litter box is not cleaned frequently enough, the smell of urine may build up. These are day-to-day odors and not usually of concern since cat boxes can be put in remote places. The concern is more likely about lingering stains and odors in the carpet.

## Ammonia

- **Step 1:**

Cat urine contains ammonia, which is a major cause of the strong smell. Ammonia can be dangerous, but it is a naturally occurring compound. While ammonia is found in soil from bacterial processes, it is also produced in the

human body. Ammonia is used to purify water supplies, as a fertilizer, a refrigerant gas, and in the manufacture of plastics, fabrics, pesticides, dyes and explosives. It is also essential in the body for making proteins, according to New York's Department of Health.

## High Concentration

- **Step 1:**

Ammonia itself is not the problem, it is the concentration. Most dangerous is pure ammonia in liquid form, also called anhydrous ammonia, not in solution with water. This form is only maintained at high pressure or at very low temperatures. It is corrosive and destructive to cells. Otherwise, ammonia mixes with water and is properly called ammonium hydroxide. Ammonium hydroxide (commonly, "ammonia") used for industrial purposes has a high concentration of about 30 percent by weight. It is considered corrosive and hazardous.

## Lower Concentrations

- **Step 1:**

According to the Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety, cleaning solutions containing ammonia for industrial use contain high concentrations and can cause irritation and burns. These solutions have a concentration of 10 to 25 percent and are considered hazardous. You may experience increased heart rate, irritation to the eyes and mucous membranes, lung irritation, coughing and nausea. Household cleaning products have a concentration of 5 to 10 percent. These products come with warnings: avoid inhalation, avoid getting fumes in the eyes, minimize contact with skin and use in well-ventilated areas.

## Very Low Concentration

- **Step 1:**

Cat urine has a concentration of .2 percent. Humans have been exposed to animal urine for thousands of years. The odor of cat urine can linger, but other than irritating you mentally, it is of little consequence. Ammonia is used as a respiratory stimulant by weight lifters and is even present in smelling salts used to awaken people who have fainted. According to [healthychild.org](http://healthychild.org), such exposures occur at levels that are too low to pose any health hazard.

## Sense of Smell

- **Step 1:**

Exposure to strong ammonia over time can cause a loss of the sense of smell. You may experience this if you work with ammonia. Some pet owners may get used to pet smells, but the ammonia from cat urine is not strong enough to cause a true loss of the sense of smell.

## Allergies

- **Step 1:**

While the odor of cat urine will not cause any health problems, people who are very sensitive, have allergies or severe respiratory problems such as asthma may seem to react. They are probably reacting to other things including cat dander, other pets and cleaning products. Don't confuse an unpleasant smell with something harmful.

Source <http://www.dailypuppy.com/articles/health-effects-from-breathing-cat-urine/57e6babd-6595-bcbo-a3b6-5d17b5bb5c2c>