

Why Is My Dog Eating My Underwear, And Is It Dangerous?

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- Not a substitute for professional veterinary help.

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Do you have a dog that likes to nibble on your unmentionables? It's fairly common for dogs to eat things they shouldn't, including the fabric in your most fetching underwear. But dogs eating underwear isn't just a minor annoyance. It can also pose a major health risk.

Eating fabric can have several harmful effects, including intestinal blockages—which may require surgery, says [Dr. Candy Akers](#), DVM, a holistic veterinarian based in Colorado.

However, it's possible to manage fabric-eating before it leads to severe consequences. Below, discover possible reasons why your dog eats underwear and learn how to nip this habit in the bud, with help from a trainer or veterinarian.

Of all the clothing items that your dog could choose to chow down on, why do they pick your underwear?

“There are likely a variety of reasons that dogs may like to eat smelly fabric, like underwear or socks,” says [Dr. Sarah Byosiere](#), PhD, Director of the [Thinking Dog Center](#) at CUNY Hunter College.

For one thing, smell is one of a dog's [most important senses](#). Sniffing gives them crucial information about a particular object and where it's been. Since underwear and socks are often [particularly smelly](#), that could explain your pup's interest.

Additionally, Dr. Akers says some dogs may find comfort in chewing on fabric that carries their [owner's scent](#). Other dogs may simply like the smell and texture of underwear, leading them to use your skivvies as a chew toy.

And finally, some dogs may enjoy the game of chase that ensues after they pick up underwear or socks, explains [Terri Bright](#), PhD, board-certified animal behaviorist. “They get chased all around the house by their owner, who wasn't paying a bit of attention to them before.”

It could be due to pica

Some dogs may also eat fabric because of a medical condition called pica, which causes dogs to eat

non-food items. In addition to making a meal out of your unmentionables, dogs with pica may also [eat dirt](#), rocks, [cardboard](#), plastic, or other potentially dangerous substances.

Pica can have a few different [medical or behavioral causes](#), including:

- Nutritional deficiencies
- [Boredom](#)
- [Anxiety](#) and [stress](#)
- [Compulsive disorders](#)
- [Teething](#) or early weaning

Should I Worry If My Dog Starts Eating Socks And Underwear?

If eating underwear is a new or sudden development for your dog, you should make a vet appointment, Dr. Akers says. Your vet can rule out any potential underlying medical problems, such as nutritional deficiencies.

However, if your dog simply licks or mouths at the fabric, you may not need to call your vet right away. Chewing and swallowing underwear poses more of an inherent risk, according to Dr. Akers. She ranks behaviors from most to least concerning in the following order.

Behavior with underwear Risk level

Licking	Lowest Risk
Mouthing	Low-Moderate Risk
Chewing (without swallowing)	Moderate-High Risk
Chewing (with swallowing)	Highest Risk

Regardless of why your dog has taken up eating your undies, the end results could put them in danger.

For example, eating dirty underwear or socks from the hamper could bother their stomach. “Your dog could pick up some harmful bacteria, which can cause GI upset,” Dr. Akers says.

An intestinal blockage, however, is one of the most serious issues caused by eating fabric. “This happens when the fabric becomes trapped in the dog’s digestive tract, which can prevent food and fluids from passing through,” Dr. Akers explains. “In some cases, emergency surgery may be necessary to remove the blockage.”

In a [2018 case analysis](#) of 72 gastrointestinal foreign body (GFB) surgeries in dogs, eating cloth accounted for 13% of all procedures.

Signs of a gastrointestinal blockage in dogs include:

- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- [Anorexia](#), or not wanting to eat
- Not going to the bathroom

- [Diarrhea](#)

If you think your dog might have an intestinal blockage from eating underwear or socks, it's important to take them to the vet right away. Endoscopic GFB surgery generally has a high success rate.

How to Keep Your Dog From Eating Socks and Undies

Thankfully, it's possible to curb this behavior with new toys, adjustments to your dog's daily routine, or a few new training tricks.

Below, find recommendations backed by experts.

Alleviate boredom

If you think your dog munches on pants out of boredom, Dr. Akers recommends keeping them occupied with "[brain games](#)," like [puzzle toys](#) or [hide and seek games](#).

If your dog likes to stay busy by chewing, consider providing more appropriate [chew toys](#) to capture their interest. Your underwear might seem a lot less appealing when compared to a [classic Kong](#) filled with peanut butter.

Obedience training

If your dog doesn't already know the command "[drop it](#)," now is a perfect time to teach them. This command means, "Let go of what is in your mouth," Bright explains.

Here's a quick cheat sheet for [training](#):

- Place two different floppy toys on the floor.
- Pick up the first toy and entice your dog to play with you.
- When they do, play for a moment. Then, quickly drop the toy and encourage them to play with the second toy instead.
- When your dog drops the first toy, say "Drop it" and offer a reward.
- Repeat until your dog starts responding to the command.

Item trading

Got a dog who doesn't like to take orders? Don't worry—there are alternatives to drop it, such as "[trade ya](#)."

If your furry friend has something inappropriate in their mouth, try to offer them a trade for the item, Byosiére says. Make sure you're trading them for an item of higher value, like a yummy [frozen treat](#). Your little rebel gets something they want, and you can return your underwear to its rightful drawers.

Restricting access to underwear

If all else fails, you can try simply keeping your dog away from your underwear in the first place.

Pick up any stray underwear or socks littering the floor, and keep your dog out of the laundry room so they can't tear into the hamper. If your dog can't locate your laundry, they can't snack on your briefs.

This means you can keep them safe from a scary trip to the [pet ER](#)—and your tighty whities can live another day.