

Nephrotic Syndrome

What is Nephrotic Syndrome?

Nephrotic Syndrome is when the kidneys leak protein into the urine and the body's protein levels fall. This can have several effects on the body, which may require treatment. When the protein level in the bloodstream falls, water is pulled out into the tissues and causes swelling (in the legs, face, back and lungs). The body tries to retain water to correct the loss, making the situation worse.

As the body tries to make more protein, it makes more cholesterol, which can be bad for you. It also makes more of the factors that make blood clot.

What symptoms might I have?

- You might retain salt and water, causing swelling in the legs or face or a feeling of breathlessness.
- Your blood pressure might be high.
- Your muscles may waste as protein is mobilised into the bloodstream.
- You may lose weight as abdominal swelling may cause nausea or poor appetite.
- Tiredness is common.
- You may be at increased risk of thromboses (blood clots).
- Your blood cholesterol level may be high.
- You may be more prone to ordinary infections, such as coughs and colds.

What causes Nephrotic Syndrome?

There are many different conditions that can cause Nephrotic Syndrome; these include Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis and Minimal Change Glomerulonephritis. (Separate information about these is available from the clinic doctor.)

What treatment might I need?

You will need treatment for as long as the protein leak continues. The protein leak may stop of its own accord and the treatment would then be changed.

For swelling: You will be shown how to cut down the sodium (salt) in your diet. Eating extra protein however, is not helpful. You will be given diuretics (water pills) to get rid of the extra salt and water that cause the swelling. You may be given a combination of different kinds of water pills.

For the risk of blood clots: You may be given *Warfarin* tablets to thin your blood and prevent clots. The dose of *Warfarin* is monitored carefully with blood tests, to make sure the blood is neither too thick nor too thin.

For high cholesterol: This is caused by the condition, and not by you eating too much fatty food. You may be given a tablet to reduce the cholesterol level.

ACE inhibitors: These are tablets that may reduce the protein leak. You may be given them if your blood pressure is not too low (as they can cause a fall in blood pressure).

Specific treatment

You will probably have had a kidney biopsy that identified the nature of your kidney damage. Some types of damage will require additional treatment to 'cure' the protein leak. You will be informed separately if this is the case.

How will I be looked after?

You will usually be looked after in the outpatient clinic. Occasionally, if swelling is very bad, a short stay in hospital may be necessary. You will be seen in clinic quite often initially, with blood and urine tests. Your treatment will be adjusted according to the results. If/when the protein leak stops, much of the treatment will also stop.

Further information can be found on the National Kidney Federation Website www.kidney.org.uk

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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