

Bitesize Guide to:



Nephrotic Syndrome

Nephrotic syndrome, also known as nephrosis, is a relatively rare kidney disorder. It is important to recognise its symptoms as it may be indicative of a more serious condition. This is our bitesize guide to the condition.

What is it?

Nephrotic syndrome occurs when a kidney's tiny filters, called glomeruli, become damaged. The glomeruli filter waste products from the blood, and when damaged, large amounts of protein leak from the blood into the urine. The protein-depleted blood in turn leaks out from the blood vessels to pool in other parts of the body, forming puffy and swelled areas. Nephrotic syndrome also makes one susceptible to blood clots, leading to high cholesterol and blood pressure.

Who gets it?

People of all ages can develop nephrotic syndrome. It is often seen in children between the ages of 2-5, and is twice as common in boys.

Why does it happen?

There are a number of diseases and kidney conditions that can damage the glomeruli and trigger nephrotic syndrome, including diabetes, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, an inflamed or scarred kidney, and some types of cancer.

Diagnosing Nephrotic Syndrome

You should visit your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Swelling around the ankles, chest, stomach, or face
- Tiredness or a lack of energy
- Lack of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Foamy or frothy urine

Doctors typically use a urine dipstick test to determine the protein level of your urine. In conjunction with blood tests that monitor protein levels in the blood, your doctor can determine if you may be suffering from nephrotic syndrome. A biopsy of sample kidney tissue can reveal the cause of nephrotic syndrome for more detailed results.

Treating Nephrotic Syndrome

There are a number of ways to manage the symptoms of nephrotic syndrome:

- Swelling can be treated by taking diuretics (pills which help get rid of excess water), and by cutting down on the salt in your diet
- Blood pressure can be lowered by taking ACE inhibitors
- Medication to thin the blood can treat blood clots that can form as a result of nephrotic syndrome
- High cholesterol can be lowered by cutting down on fatty foods, and in some cases with drugs

If necessary, you may receive specific treatment for the underlying condition causing nephrotic syndrome

4 Key Facts about Nephrotic Syndrome

1. Nephrotic syndrome may be caused by infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and C and syphilis.
2. Other symptoms of nephrotic syndrome include breathlessness, chest pains, and white lines forming on the nails.
3. A dipstick test is a chemically responsive strip of paper or plastic that is dipped into a urine sample; the strip will change colour to indicate how much of certain substances (such as blood, proteins, and glucose) are present in your pee.
4. You are at greater risk of infection when you have nephrotic syndrome. You may be advised to take penicillin to prevent this.

If you think you may be suffering from nephrotic syndrome, speak to your GP.

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