

5. Nephrotic syndrome

Nephrotic syndrome

Nephrotic syndrome is one of the manifestations of glomerulonephritis. It is a condition that occurs when there is a very large amount of protein in the urine (greater than 3 grams per day).

In addition to the large amount of protein in the urine, nephrotic syndrome is usually accompanied by oedema (a build-up of fluid in the tissues of the body - ankles, feet, hands and face) and raised concentrations of fats in the blood (cholesterol and triglycerides).

In addition to the tests described in section 2, a renal biopsy will often be recommended to determine the exact form of nephritis present and to help decide appropriate treatment.

Considerable improvement of the nephrotic syndrome can be achieved with treatment. The amount of protein in the urine can be reduced with drugs, usually used to treat blood pressure called angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors (ACE inhibitors) or angiotensin II receptor antagonists (AIIIRAs).

These medications have also been shown to slow the rate of progression of kidney disease and reduce the amount of swelling or oedema in the tissues. It is also important to measure and control the level of cholesterol in the blood. This can be achieved with diet, exercise, weight reduction and with one of a family of drugs often called statins.

Sometimes, drugs that suppress the immune system such as prednisone, cortisone, cyclophosphamide, cyclosporin A or mycophenolate may be prescribed if a renal biopsy indicates they will be of benefit.

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