

“Nephrotic WHAT?!”...

Understanding Primary Nephrotic Syndrome

Nephrotic syndrome is not a disease, but an umbrella term for the collection of signs and symptoms that occur when the kidney filters (glomeruli) leak protein into the urine.

Don't be intimidated by the disease names; they are just descriptions of how the kidney tissue looks under a microscope.

Some symptoms of nephrotic syndrome include:

1

Proteinuria

('leaking' protein into the urine)

2

Edema

(swelling)

3

Hypertension

(increased blood pressure)

4

Hypoalbuminemia

(low levels of albumin in blood)

5

Hypercholesterolemia

(high cholesterol)

Someone who is experiencing these symptoms but has not had a kidney biopsy is diagnosed with nephrotic syndrome.

To learn more about what is causing a patient's nephrotic syndrome, doctors may choose to perform a kidney biopsy. After a biopsy, a patient is usually diagnosed more specifically, based on what can be seen under the microscope.

The most common diagnoses are:

Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis (FSGS)

Some sections of kidney filters show scarring.

Minimal Change Disease

Kidney tissue shows very little change from normal kidney tissue.

Membranous Nephropathy

Immune system attacks kidney tissues and damages filtering units.