



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk

Membranous Nephropathy Treatments

“Membranous Treatments: Swelling and Steroids”

Patient: This nephrotic syndrome makes me puffy. My doctor calls this edema. I hear that steroids can also make me puffy. So how do steroids help me get rid of my edema, if they also make me get swollen?

Dr Falk: So the fluid of the nephrotic syndrome is very different than the fluid or the sense of puffiness from prednisone. The edema or the fluid from the nephrotic syndrome you can see and feel, usually in your legs. If you take your thumb and press on your ankle, you'll see that when you release your thumb, that there'll be a pit or a depression in your skin. Not the sock line that everybody gets, especially if they have brand new socks, that has a complete ring around your ankle. But take your thumb and press gently into an area right above your ankle and see if you have a depression there. That's fluid that's called edema, and from losing protein in your urine. There are other causes of edema, but from a kidney perspective, it's usually a loss of protein in the urine. That's a very different kind of puffiness than you get with steroids, or Prednisone or any kind of glucocorticoid.

One of your least favorite drugs which really causes a different kind of swelling, which is unfortunately really a redistribution of fat: Prednisone, or any kind of glucocorticoid, can help to a certain extent, but not a huge amount in Membranous Nephropathy. But if the steroids do lower the amount of protein in the urine, then in fact the edema will go away. Because if the disease goes away, then the swelling goes away, the cholesterol gets better, and you won't have to take these kinds of medicines.