



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Amy Mottl

Diabetic Kidney Disease

“Diabetic Kidney Disease: How do you test for it?”

Patient: How do you test for diabetic nephropathy?

Dr Mottl: All diabetics should be evaluated on an annual basis for diabetic kidney disease. If they're being followed by their primary care physician, they should be getting urine tests to see whether or not there's albumin spilling into the urine.

Albumin is a specific type of protein that should be kept on the blood side of the filtration unit and not spilled into the urine. When patients have diabetic kidney disease, more often than not, they start to have damage to the filtration barrier such that the protein, or albumin then leaks into the urine. This can be detected by a urine test.

Another way that diabetes can manifest in kidney disease is by the decreasing ability of the kidney to clear out the waste products from the body. Creatinine is a product of muscle metabolism and the kidneys are responsible for getting rid of it. One of the tests that we do is to check your blood level of creatinine. As the kidneys have decreased abilities to clear it, the levels in the blood will rise.

This creatinine can then be plugged into a very complex equation that then gives us a number called a glomerular filtration rate, or GFR. This GFR typically runs between 0 and 100 in women and 0 and 120 in men. So you can kind of think of it as a gauge of percentage of kidney function. When it drops below 90 and certainly when it drops below 60, that's considered abnormal, so then you should be seen by a nephrologist, or kidney disease specialist.