



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk

Membranous Nephropathy

“What symptoms might I experience?”

Patient: What kind of symptoms might I experience?

Dr Falk: Well, many of the symptoms that you already have. That is, when you leak protein into the urine, as a consequence of that loss of protein into the urine, the amount of protein in the blood decreases. So the serum albumin, which is the most common blood protein goes down. And protein in the blood acts like a sponge, holding fluid in the vessel wall, and actually in the vessel itself. When that sponge has decreased or has gotten smaller, that is, the amount of protein in the blood has decreased, fluid leaks out of the vessel wall into your legs, into your feet, sometimes up higher into your abdomen, or when you lie flat in the morning and get up you may have big puffy eyes from fluid that has migrated from your lower extremities, up into your back or into your eyes. So edema, or fluid retention, is a very common manifestation of this disease.

In some patients, Membranous Nephropathy causes high blood pressure and that may be a symptom that you’ll find as well, or at least a sign that your physician will tell you about. The other common consequence of this is another laboratory test, and that is, as you leak protein into your urine, your liver tries to make more protein, and it also turns out that it makes more cholesterol.

So patients with Membranous Nephropathy with a lot of protein in their urine have a high cholesterol, have a low serum or blood albumin level, have fluid in their legs, or edema—peripheral edema means it’s in your legs—and a high serum cholesterol, and those four features together are part of what is called the Nephrotic Syndrome, that many patients with Membranous Nephropathy have.