

# Nephritis — National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), our nation's special education law, defines 14 [categories of disability](#) under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services. One of those categories is "[Other Health Impairment](#)," or OHI, for short. Within OHI's definition, numerous disabilities and medical conditions are explicitly named. **Nephritis** is one such.

This short resource page accompanies NICHCY's fact sheet on [Other Health Impairment](#) and provides a brief overview of nephritis and connections to sources of additional information.

[Back to top](#)

## A Brief Look at Nephritis

*Nephritis* means that one or both of a person's kidneys are inflamed. The kidneys are very important organs in the body, because they clean the blood by filtering out excess water, salt, and waste products from the food we eat. Healthy kidneys keep protein in the blood, which in turn helps our bodies soak up water from the tissue inside. Damaged kidneys, on the other hand, can leak protein into the urine, which affects the ability of the body to absorb water from our tissues. This causes the tissues to swell.

Nephritis may be due to infection, but it's more commonly associated with autoimmune disorders that affect the major organs of the body. Individuals with lupus, for example, are at much higher risk for developing nephritis. When associated with lupus, nephritis cannot be cured, but it can be treated and often goes into remission. Antibiotics are the primary treatment for nephritis. With lupus, steroids may also be used.

You may also hear the term *nephrotic syndrome* used. Both children and adults can have nephrotic syndrome. In itself, it is not a disease but may be the first signs of kidney disease that impairs the body's ability to produce urine. In children, nephrotic syndrome is most common between the ages of 1½ and 5 years, and seems to affect boys more often than girls. Symptoms in children include:

- high levels protein in the blood or, paradoxically, low levels
- swelling, when salt and water build up in the tissues
- less frequent urination
- weight gain from water retention

Diagnosing childhood nephrotic syndrome involves taking a urine sample to test for protein.

[Back to top](#)

## Resources of More Information on Nephritis

### American Kidney Fund

(800) 638-8299

[www.kidneyfund.org](http://www.kidneyfund.org)

### American Society of Pediatric Nephrology

[www.aspneph.com](http://www.aspneph.com)

### National Kidney Foundation



(800) 622-9010  
[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

[Back to top](#)