# MY TREATMENT: ALBUMIN

Albumin is the most common type of protein found in the blood. It provides the body with the protein needed to maintain body growth and repair tissues. Albumin level measures whether you are getting enough nutrients. It is important to maintain >3.8 gm/dl for good results and to reduce problems. The amount and type of protein you eat is very important as well, and your dietician will talk with you about what you need to do.

#### WHAT DOES ALBUMIN DO?

Albumin does many things in the body, including:

- Building, repairing, and keeping up body tissues
- Pulling extra fluid from swollen tissues back into the blood, where it can be removed by the dialyzer
- Making enzymes and hormones
- Transporting nutrients

Heartland Kidney Network

- Supporting muscle contraction
- Assisting in blood clotting
- Being part of antibodies

#### WHAT CAUSES LOW ALBUMIN?

- The body's need for more protein because of stress caused by illness, infection, inflammation, and surgery
- Increased urinary protein loss because of a condition known as nephrotic syndrome
- Loss of protein during peritoneal dialysis (PD) exchanges
- Decreased appetite
- Caused by fullness and glucose absorption from dialysis solution
- Due to different medical conditions like cancer or depression

- Cost of high protein foods
- Trouble chewing, swallowing or dental problems
- Food allergies
- Poor protein absorption from the Gastro Intestinal (GI) tract

#### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF LOW ALBUMIN?

- Swelling
- Tiredness
- Muscle weakness
- Difficulty fighting infection
- Poor wound healing
- White nail syndrome

## WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO IMPROVE MY ALBUMIN LEVELS

Improving albumin is more than eating protein; other things may also affect your albumin level.

What You can do:

- Get adequate dialysis by
  - Going to every dialysis treatment
  - Staying your full treatment time
- · Eat enough protein
  - Add protein shake or powders to your diet
- See your dentist regularly
- Talk to your dietitian

#### What Staff can do?

- Assess and monitor you for:
  - Dialysis adequacy
  - Signs and symptoms of infection
  - Vascular access problems
  - Catheter exit site problems
  - Dental problems
  - Appetite
  - Depression
- Staff may recommend:
  - Quick treatment for infections and inflammation
  - Going to the dentist
  - Nutritional supplements (oral or Intravenous)
  - Eating small meals more often
  - Medication to increase your appetite

### **MY QUESTIONS**

Ask your Care Team: Am I getting enough dialysis? What can I do to improve my albumin level? How much protein do I need to eat? What if I do not eat or like meat? Does my insurance cover protein supplement?

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