
INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL SERVICE

Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase (ESBL) Patient / Visitor Information

What is an Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase (ESBL)

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase.

- A beta-lactamase is an enzyme produced by some bacteria (germs) which prevents certain antibiotics from working.
- Bacteria that are able to produce this enzyme are more resistant to many of the antibiotics prescribed to treat infections, thus making an infection caused by an ESBL germ more difficult to treat.
- Most commonly, ESBL is associated with the bacteria *E. coli* and Klebsiella species. *E. coli* and Klebsiella species are normal inhabitants of your bowel.

How is ESBL detected?

Laboratory samples which identify ESBL e.g. rectal swabs, blood tests, wound swabs may be taken as part of your care.

How might ESBL affect me?

ESBL can cause colonisation or infection.

- **Colonisation** means you have the bacteria in your bowel however you are not sick because of it and your hospital stay should not be increased.
- **Infection** means that bacteria in or on the body are making you sick
 - Resistance to antibiotics limits some of the antibiotics that can be used to treat the infection.

How is ESBL spread?

ESBL can be passed from person to person by contaminated hands if they have not cleaned them properly.

ESBL can get onto the hands after they have touched other people with the infection or contaminated surfaces or equipment and not cleaned their hands properly.

ESBL is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

Can I spread it to other people?

- In hospitals you can potentially spread this bacterium to others as there are other patients who are at risk of infection because their body's defence mechanisms are weakened by illness, surgery, medications and procedures.

- ESBL is not usually a risk to healthy people and at home normal hygiene applies.

What will happen when I am in hospital?

- You may be moved to a single room and placed in contact isolation and/or have your own toilet to reduce the risk of ESBL spreading from you to other patients.
- Hospital staff may wear gloves and gowns or aprons when carrying out certain aspects of your care.

What can I do to prevent spreading it to other people while in hospital?

- If you are in contact isolation, it is important that you do not visit patients in other parts of the ward or in other wards in the hospital. You may also be asked not to go into communal areas.
- Good hand hygiene is the single most important measure to prevent the spread of ESBL within hospitals.
- You can help prevent the spread of ESBL by cleaning your hands regularly particularly after going to the toilet. Alcohol based hand rubs or gels are hand cleansers that do not require water and are an excellent alternative to hand washing. They are available for use in all of our wards and departments.
- **Encourage everyone who visits including healthcare workers to cleanse their hands after visiting you.**

Will it affect my family and friends?

- Visitors, including pregnant women and young children, are not at risk from ESBL. **However, please remind your visitors that they must wash their hands or use the alcohol based hand rub on leaving your room.**
- If your visitors have other people they wish to visit in the hospital they should do that before coming to see you.
- Your laundry can be washed as usual.

Will ESBL prevent me from going home?

ESBL will not prevent you from going home. You will be discharged as soon as your general condition allows.

What happens when I go home?

The presence of ESBL does not pose a risk to the health of your family and friends when you are at home or at work.

- Good hand washing is important for you and everyone else at home
- Normal household cleaning practices are sufficient
- Towels, clothes, bed sheets and other items can be washed in a domestic washing machine.
- No special washing temperature or products are recommended
- All utensils and dishes can be washed as normal
- Restrictions on activities or visitors to your home are not necessary

If there is anything else you wish to know, please ask your Nurse or Doctor.