

What is ESBL?

ESBL stands for **E**xtended **S**pectrum **B**eta-**L**actamase. Beta-lactamases are enzymes produced by some bacteria that may make them resistant to some antibiotics. ESBL production is associated with a bacteria usually found in the bowel. ESBL bacteria can be present in the bowel of individuals without their knowledge and may survive there harmlessly until the person becomes ill or requires antibiotic therapy.

Who is at risk of being infected with an ESBL producing bacteria?

- Anyone can get an ESBL producing bacteria. Patients in hospital/care homes with open wounds, urinary catheters, drainage tubes and those who are ill are at a higher risk of getting an ESBL bacteria.
- Anyone receiving a lot of antibiotics, in particular if the course of antibiotics has not been completed for the prescribed period of time, may be at increased risk of getting the bacteria.
- Anyone who has had contact with a patient/client that already has an ESBL producing bacteria is also at higher risk.

How are ESBL producing bacteria spread?

ESBL bacteria can be spread from person to person on contaminated hands of both patients and healthcare workers. The risk of transmission is increased if the person has diarrhoea or has a urinary catheter in place as these bacteria are often carried harmlessly in the bowel.

Can ESBL infections be treated?

- Though ESBL producing bacteria are resistant to a number of commonly used antibiotics, there are antibiotics available to treat infections caused by these bacteria.
- In some circumstances, treatment can be given at home but more severe infections may require treatment in hospital. If antibiotic treatment is necessary your doctor will discuss this with you.
- Some people will carry ESBL resistant bacteria in their bowel without having an active infection and may not require treatment.

How can the spread of ESBL producing bacteria be controlled?

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop ESBLs spreading.

Effective control measures include:

- Thorough hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water regularly and particularly before eating and after using the toilet. Hand sanitisers can be used at other times for hand hygiene.
- Thorough hand hygiene for family and friends before visiting and on leaving and especially if they have provided personal care. There is no need to restrict visitors.
- Isolation of patients – this may occur in hospital but is not usually necessary in the community.
- Thorough cleaning of equipment and surfaces such as commodes and toilet seats between use.
- Care staff should wear a disposable plastic apron and disposable gloves and it is important they wash their hands when these are removed.
- Washing laundry with detergent and warm water.

- Antibiotics should only be taken if they are absolutely necessary and when they have been prescribed for you by a healthcare professional.
- Antibiotics should be taken as prescribed and the full course of treatments should be completed.
- Antibiotics do not work against viruses such as colds and flu.

If you require further advice or information, please contact the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the ward/care home staff.

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.

Healthcare workers, patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.

Extended spectrum beta lactamase (ESBL) bacteria

Information leaflet for patients and visitors