

Patient Information
ESBL
(Extended Spectrum
Beta-Lactamase)

Infection Prevention Team

What is an ESBL?

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase. A Beta-lactamase is an enzyme produced by a bacteria (germ) which breaks down certain types of antibiotics.

It was first reported in Europe in 1983. ESBL producing bacteria are resistant to some of the antibiotics used to treat infection when it occurs. This resistance makes infection more difficult to treat.

Infection from ESBL producing bacteria occurs mainly in urine, but may also infect wounds, the chest or blood. Sometimes these bacteria can be in your body (usually your gut) and not make you sick. This is called colonisation instead of infection, as you feel well with no signs or symptoms of infection.

Hospitalised patients seem to be at the greatest risk of this infection.

How did I acquire an ESBL?

1. Exposure to previous treatments can occasionally increase resistance and cause the bacteria to produce the enzyme, ESBL.
2. From other people already carrying the bacteria.
3. From the hands of other people or healthcare workers who have not washed their hands properly after direct contact with an infected patient or the environment and equipment they use.

Can I spread it to other people?

People in hospital are more at risk of developing infection because their body defence mechanisms are already weakened by illness, surgery, drugs and procedures.

You may be transferred to a single room depending on your situation. Hospital staff may wear gloves and aprons while performing tasks in your room.

Good hand washing practice or the use of alcohol foam amongst staff, visitors and patients are the best preventative methods of stopping cross infection.

Because there could be, especially vulnerable patients in hospitals, it is important that you do not visit patients in other parts of the ward or in the hospital.

Is treatment available?

Despite being resistant to many of the usual antibiotics, treatment options are still available should infection occur.

People do not have to stay in hospital until the ESBL producing bacteria is cleared. You will be able to go home when your general condition allows, regardless of whether you are still positive for ESBL or not.

What about my visitors?

Visitors will be asked to use the alcohol foam upon entering and leaving the ward.

Please do not allow visitors to sit or lie on your bed.

Visitors are advised not to enter the ward if they have a cough or cold, diarrhoea, vomiting, open wounds or weeping skin lesions.

What happens when I go home?

If you have a wound you may be discharged from hospital before your infection is completely healed. The community nurses may be asked to attend to your dressing at home.

If your wound becomes red, swollen or oozes or if you have a fever please contact your GP.

The infection won't affect your family or friends when you are at home. Usual personal hygiene and household cleaning is sufficient. Restrictions to activities or visitors are not necessary.

Any other information

If you still have any questions regarding ESBL or any infection prevention and control issues. Please ask the Nurse taking care of you to contact the infection prevention and control nurse who will visit you on the ward.