

ESBL (Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase)

This leaflet is for patients, relatives and visitors and explains what having Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL) means and how it is managed.

What is ESBL?

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase. It is an enzyme produced by bacteria, which breaks down and destroys some antibiotics, such as penicillins and cephalosporins (antibiotics that are widely used antibiotics in hospitals. These bacteria are known as ESBL producers.

ESBL producing bacteria (germs) are commonly found in the bowel/gut of humans, e.g. E. coli. People who have been on antibiotics are more likely to have these bacteria.

How are ESBL producing bacteria spread?

ESBL can be passed from person to person usually on the hands and from contaminated items, equipment and sometimes via food.

How might ESBL affect me?

People can carry ESBL producers without any ill effects and no infection being present. This is called "colonisation" (carrying without signs of infection).

Infection from ESBL producing bacteria occurs mainly in the urinary tract but may also infect wounds and sometimes causes blood poisoning.

You may be nursed in a single room or with other patients carrying ESBL producing bacteria. This is to minimise the risk of these bacteria spreading to other vulnerable patients. This will not affect the care you are given.

How is ESBL treated?

Although ESBL producers are resistant to many antibiotics, there are still antibiotics available for the treatment of clinical infections. Your doctor will discuss antibiotic treatment with you if required.

Colonisation may continue after successful treatment of the infection. Further antibiotics are not recommended to clear this colonisation.

Questions and concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about ESBL, please ask your nurse for further information or you can contact the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Infection Control team on 0118 322 6914, email: infection.control@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Simon Wells, RBFT Infection Prevention & Control, October 2022. Next review due: October 2024

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