



## Patient Information

# Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL)

### What are ESBLs?

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL). ESBLs are enzymes (chemicals) produced by some bacteria, which can break down certain types of antibiotics, preventing them from working. Bacteria that produce these enzymes are resistant to many of the antibiotics prescribed to treat infections.

### What illnesses do ESBL Producing Bacteria cause?

These bacteria are usually found in the bowel, where they live harmlessly without causing any problems. This is called colonisation as you are well with no signs or symptoms of infection. However, occasionally the bacteria may get into an area of the body where they are not normally found such as the urinary tract causing an infection. Urinary tract infections are the most commonly diagnosed infections but infection in the chest, wounds and in the blood can occur.

### Who is at risk?

There are a number of factors that make an individual more likely to become colonised or infected with these organisms.

They are:

- prolonged hospital stay
- repeated courses of antibiotics known as cephalosporins
- staying in a nursing or residential home
- presence of indwelling devices such as urinary catheter, feeding tubes
- having an underlying illness that compromises immunity
- diabetes mellitus
- age over 60 years
- recurrent urinary tract infections

### What happens when a patient is found to have an ESBL producing bacterial infection?

If you are admitted into hospital you may be transferred to a single room to reduce the risk to other patients on the ward as people in hospital are at greater risks of infection because of illness, recent surgery and invasive devices, for example urinary catheters or intravenous cannulas (drips). It is important that you tell healthcare professionals that you have an ESBL.



# Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL)

Advice to patients and relatives whether in hospital or at home:

- Ensure you wash your hands after using the toilet and before you eat
- Avoid touching any drips, drains and catheters, that you may have

Any of the clinical staff looking after you in hospital will also take extra precautions to prevent the spread to other patients by wearing disposable gloves and aprons when in direct contact with you. Hand hygiene is also vitally important in reducing the risk of spread to other vulnerable people.

## Can ESBL Producing Bacterial Infections be treated?

Yes, there are still antibiotics that will treat the infection effectively. Your doctor may need to discuss treatment with the Consultant Microbiologist and/or an Antibiotic Pharmacist as the choice of antibiotic to use is limited.

## How is ESBL spread?

ESBL producing bacteria can be spread from one person to another on unwashed hands, equipment that is contaminated or may be picked up from the environment. This can happen both in the community and in hospital.

## Can I have visitors in hospital or when I am at home?

Yes. You can have visitors in hospital and at home. Visitors are advised to visit you last if they are visiting other patients in the hospital. ESBL may be passed on through touch, you and your visitors should practice good hand hygiene, which is proven to be effective.

## Are any special precautions required at Home?

No. Good personal hygiene and keeping a clean environment are sufficient

## For Further Information:

- Ward based infection control link networker, named nurse or community nurse.
- Your medical team or General Practitioner (GP).
- NHS UK - <http://www.nhs.uk>
- Public Health England - <https://www.gov.uk/>

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

### Document Control

Division: Corporate  
Department: Infection Prevention & Control  
Approved Date: 27 May 2020  
Next Review Date: June 2023  
Document Number: Corp - PIL0036