

Infection Prevention and Control

Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase ESBL- Information for Patients and Relatives

You may have been told you have ESBL. This leaflet aims to help you understand what is meant by this and to answer some of your questions

What is ESBL?

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase, an enzyme (chemical) made by some germs which prevents certain antibiotics from working. Germs 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.

Why is it important to know if you are carrying this germ?

ESBL germs are sometimes found during routine investigations. People often feel well with no signs or symptoms of infection and therefore do not require treatment.

However, if ESBL producing germs get the opportunity to enter your body they can cause problems. This is more likely to happen in people who are already unwell. If your doctor feels the ESBL germ is causing an infection they may prescribe antibiotics.

How did I get ESBL?

It is difficult to say exactly where you may have acquired an ESBL producing germ. Some people come into hospital already carrying the germ; some pick it up whilst in hospital. It may be as a result of previous treatment or have been passed to you as a result of contact with healthcare workers, other patients or visitors.

Can I stay on the same ward?

Hopefully you can stay on the same ward. You may be moved to a single room to be nursed in isolation, with the door closed. If a single room is not available on your



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current ward you might be asked to move to a single room on another ward.

If there are several patients with the same germ on the ward you may be nursed in a shared area with patients of the same sex.

How does this germ spread?

Like most germs, ESBL spreads easily on unwashed hands or on equipment that has not been cleaned correctly.

How can we prevent it spreading?

Thorough hand washing and use of alcohol gel is the best way to prevent the spread of this germ. Staff, patients and visitors must all be encouraged to wash their hands and use the alcohol gel that is provided.

Staff will wear gloves and aprons to protect their hands and uniforms when undertaking specific tasks.

Can I have visitors?

Your friends and family may continue to visit you. They do not need to wear gloves or aprons whilst visiting, unless involved in hands-on nursing care. It is important that your visitors wash their hands when they arrive and before going home.

Advice for safe laundering of clothing and soiled items should be sought from your ward nurse.

What happens when I am ready to leave hospital?

If you are otherwise well, ESBL should not delay your discharge. If you need a district nurse he/she will be informed. You do not need to take any special precautions when you get home.

What if I need to come into hospital again?

If you are admitted to any hospital in the future always tell your nurses and doctors that you have been ESBL positive in the past.

If you wish to speak to the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses about any issues relating to ESBL, please ask the nurse looking after you.

The Infection Prevention and Control Nurses are available, Monday to Friday between 9am and 5 pm to speak to you or your family. Contact us on Telephone number 024 7696 4791

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Other leaflets produced by the Infection Prevention and Control Team include:

- Isolation and Barrier Nursing
- Clostridium Difficile
- MRSA

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 4791 and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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