

Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase Producing Bacteria ESBL Information Sheet for Patients and Visitors

What is an ESBL?

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase. ESBLs are enzymes produced by some bacteria. Bacteria can cause infections. To treat or kill these infections antibiotics are used. When bacteria have ESBLs, many antibiotics do not work in treating the infection.

An ESBL can be found on the skin or in the rectal area without causing an infection. This is called the carrier state. An ESBL may cause a problem for patients in the hospital who have a low resistance to infection.

What are the symptoms of an ESBL?

If an infection caused by an ESBL occurs, the symptoms depend on where the infection is. For instance, with a wound infection, it will cause redness of the surrounding skin and a discharge from the wound. If it is in the urine, it may cause burning when urinating. It may also cause the need to urinate more often.

Can ESBL be treated?

Yes. If an infection occurs you will be given antibiotics. If you have ESBL, but do not have an infection (the carrier state), antiseptic soap may be used.

How is it spread?

It can be spread by touching people who have it or by handling things that they have used. Washing your hands well is the most important thing you can do to stop the spread of ESBL.

What happens if I have an ESBL?

If you have an ESBL, you will have a room of your own or share a room with another patient who also has an ESBL. This helps to protect you and prevent the spread of an ESBL. While in hospital you will be in Contact Precautions.

What are Contact Precautions?

Contact Precautions are things that are done by staff and visitors to reduce risks to others. These include:

- A sign is put on your door about Contact Precautions.
- Supplies are stored outside your room.
- You may need to stay in your room.
- People entering your room must wear a gown and gloves.
- Everyone helping you with personal care must wear a gown and gloves. Before leaving your room, everyone must take off their gown and gloves and wash their hands.
- If you need to leave your room for a test or x-ray, a staff member will help you get ready. You will need to wear a clean patient gown or clean clothing.
- Wash hands well and often. Use soap and water or the waterless hand rinse that is placed in your room and outside the doorway.

Can I have visitors?

Yes. Healthy people are not at risk for developing infections with an ESBL. Visitors must wear a gown and gloves in the room. They must remove the gown and gloves and wash their hands when leaving the room. There will be a sign on the door to let your visitors know what to do. Visitors should not go to common areas such as the lounge without first washing their hands.

What happens when I go home?

You can go home with an ESBL. Continue to wash your hands well. Good hand washing prevents infections. Your nurse will review any special instructions with you before you go home, and provide you with a handout

What should I do if I need continuing health care?

When any further health care is needed, you should let the health care worker know that you have an ESBL. You may still carry an ESBL even though you feel well and it is causing you no harm.

You need to give this information:

- when you go to a doctor
- when you go to a hospital or clinic
- any time you need to give a medical history

This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, please ask Infection Prevention & Control, your physician or health care worker.