



Infection Prevention & Control

Fact Sheet

ESBL

Extended-spectrum Beta -lactamases

What is ESBL?

A *Beta-Lactamase* bacteria or germ, has an enzyme that can stop certain antibiotics from destroying them. This ability to stop antibiotics from working is known as **resistance**. Not only are ESBLs capable of breaking down antibiotics, they can transmit this ability to other germs. ESBLs normally live in the bowel, but can also be found in the urine and on skin.



How might ESBL affect me?

Infection from ESBL producing germs occurs mainly in urine, but may also infect wounds & blood. An ESBL Infection can be treated, but different types of antibiotics must be used.

ESBL can be present on you skin or in your gut without causing harm. This is called colonization instead of infection. **This does not require treatment.**

Someone who is colonized with ESBLs can pass on these germs to others if they do not practice good hand hygiene

How is ESBL spread?

ESBL germs are found in the community and the hospital settings. It is mainly spread by contact with unwashed hands and equipment. If you are admitted to hospital or another health-care facility, special precautions will be put in place to prevent caregivers from spreading ESBL to other patients. People in hospitals or care homes are more at risk from ESBL as they usually are not healthy.

Can my family and friends get ESBL from me?

Healthy people who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk of getting ESBL. Hand washing, good personal hygiene and care when cleaning will reduce the spread of ESBL to others at home or in the community.

What Special Precautions are required for ESBL?

It is important that precautions are taken to stop ESBL from spreading to other patients in the hospital or residents in long term care facilities. These include:

- Single room accommodation if possible (the door can remain open).
- Gloves and gown must be worn by everyone who cares for you.
- A sign outside your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions.
- Equipment used in your daily care will remain in the room.
- Everyone who leaves your room must clean their hands well.
- You must clean your hands before you leave the room.

What precautions should I take at home and in the community?

- Continue with your usual activities. That includes being close to loved ones.
- Everyone who might help you with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet should wash their hands after assisting with you.
- Wash your hands after you go to the bathroom, before preparing food or eating food.
- Carry a hand sanitizer with you, so you can clean your hands if soap and water are not available.
- If you have an ESBL skin infection, wash your hands before and after touching your wound. Keep skin infections and wounds covered with clean, dry bandages. Place used bandages into a plastic bag and directly into the garbage.

- Maintain excellent personal hygiene through regular bathing/showers and **always use your own towel and soap.**
- Do not share personal items (razors, towels, washcloths, clothing).
- Always tell your physicians, nurses or other care providers that you have ESBL. This helps prevent spread to others who may be ill already.
- Dishes and cutlery may be washed in the usual manner with dish soap and hot water or a dishwasher.
- Wash clothing, bedding & towels that have become soiled with the regular household laundry. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
- Clean your house often, especially frequently touched areas with a household cleaner.

Will I always have ESBL?

Maybe. Your physician will treat the first infection and if you remain healthy, over time the ESBL which your body is carrying will disappear. Talk to your physician about planning to do follow up tests to see if ESBL continues to be present.

How can I help?

If you go to any hospital, doctor, or receive Home Care, report that you were identified as having ESBL. This will allow them to check your status and use precautions to make sure they do not carry the germ to other patients.

Remember, good hand hygiene is the #1 way to stop the spread of ESBL



Hand washing Protocol

Hand Cleansing with Water:

- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply soap and rub together for at least 15 seconds, washing well between the fingers and around nails.
- Rinse well with warm running water.
- Dry with hand towel or paper towel.
- Turn the tap off using paper towel or hand towel (remember...your hands were dirty when you turned the tap on).
- Throw the paper towel in the trash. If you are using a hand towel, do not share it with other people and wash it often.

Hand Cleansing with Hand Sanitizer:

- Apply approximately 1 tsp. of sanitizer to your palm.
- Cover each area, rubbing vigorously and interlacing fingers.
- Rub for 10-15 seconds until hands are dry.
- Do not rinse off.