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This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

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design by Medical Illustration

Information for patients A Guide to Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase producing Organisms (ESBL)



Infection Control



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ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase. A Beta-Lactamase is an enzyme produced by bacteria which breaks down certain types of antibiotics. The groups of bacteria that can produce ESBL are usually associated with the bowel. ESBL producing bacteria are resistant to some of the antibiotics used to treat infection when it occurs. This resistance makes infection more difficult to treat.

How might ESBL affect me?

Infection from ESBL producing bacteria occurs mainly in urine, but also may infect wounds and the blood. Sometimes these bacteria can be in your body (usually your gut) but you remain well. This is called colonisation instead of infection, as you are well with no signs and symptoms of infection. If you are colonised you will not require any treatment with antibiotics, but if you become unwell your doctor will discuss antibiotics treatment with you.

How are ESBL's spread?

- From patients already carrying the germ, especially if they have diarrhoea
- On the hands of patients who have not washed their hands properly after contact with an infected patient or equipment. You can help prevent the spread of infection by cleaning your hands
- On the hands of Healthcare workers who have not washed their hands properly after contact with an infected patient or equipment. You can help prevent the spread of infection by asking your healthcare worker if they have cleaned their hands
- On the hands of visitors who have not washed their hands properly after contact with an infected patient or equipment. You can help prevent the spread of infection by asking your visitor if they have cleaned their hands
- On your hands after going to the toilet. This may be from contact with a contaminated toilet or from your own bowel if you are already carrying the germ

Can I spread it to other people?

People in hospitals are more at risk of infection because their body defence mechanisms are weakened by illness, surgery, drugs and procedures. You may be transferred to a single room to help prevent spread. Hospital staff may wear disposable aprons and gloves while performing tasks in your room. Prevention of infections rests mainly in encouraging good hand washing practices among staff, visitors and patients and also the use of the hand gel provided in your room. Due to the different types of infections in hospitals, it is important that you do not visit patients in other parts of the ward or in other wards in the hospital.

How can ESBL be treated?

Despite being resistant to many of the normal antibiotics, treatment options are still available should infection occur. If antibiotic treatment is necessary your doctors will discuss this with you.

Will I have to stay in hospital until ESBL is cleared?

Patients do not have to stay in hospital until the ESBL producing bacteria is cleared. You will be sent home when your general condition allows, regardless of whether you are still positive for ESBL or not.

How will this affect my visitors?

Visitors will be requested to wash or use hand gels on their hands on entering and leaving the ward and before helping you eat and drink. Ask your visitors to take your dirty washing home as soon as possible to be washed in the usual way.

How will I know when ESBL – producing bacteria is no longer a problem?

Depending on the site of infection you may need to have a negative result. For example, if you have an infection for ESBL producing bacteria in your urine, you will be asked for a sample of urine.

What happens when I go home?

You may be discharged from hospital before your infection is cleared. Please complete any medication you have been given. Usual personal hygiene and household cleaning is sufficient. Restriction of activities or visitors is not necessary.

Who can you ask for information and advice?

Understanding infection can be complicated. This information leaflet may not cover all the concerns you may have about infection in the hospital setting.

You can get further advice and information by:

- Asking the Ward Sister or Clinical Nurse Manager
- Asking to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention and control Team
- Visiting or contacting the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns. They can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

You can contact PALS at RJAH on extension 4606

NHS Direct is a nurse-led advice service run by the NHS for patients with questions about diagnosis and treatment of common conditions

Telephone: **0845 4647**

Website: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk