



Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL)

***Information for people who have had
an ESBL positive infection***

What is ESBL?

ESBL stands for **E**xtended **S**pectrum **B**eta-**L**actamase. Beta-lactamase is an enzyme produced by some bacteria (such as E. coli) that makes certain types of antibiotics ineffective. ESBL bacteria affect more types of antibiotic than usual.

This means that any infection caused by bacteria that produce ESBL may need treated with different antibiotics than we would normally use.

Bacteria that can produce ESBL tend to be types that normally live in the bowel, and they most commonly cause urinary tract infections.

What does this mean for me?

Lots of bacteria normally live inside your bowels and on your skin without causing any issues.

If some of your normal bowel bacteria produce ESBL this is unlikely to affect your health as long as they are in your bowel.

If these bacteria grow somewhere they wouldn't normally, such as in the urinary tract, this may cause an infection.

As ESBL positive bacteria are resistant to many antibiotics, we may need to use different antibiotics to treat this infection than we would normally.

What if I'm ever admitted to hospital?

If you are ever in hospital, you may be kept in a single room to prevent the spread of ESBL positive bacteria to other people.

Staff may wear aprons and gloves when in your room, and will wash or sanitise their hands before and after seeing you. You will be tested for ESBL each time you are admitted to hospital.

Why do I grow ESBL positive bacteria?

People develop ESBL positive bacteria for several reasons.

Sometimes, normal bacteria in people who have had several courses of antibiotics develop resistance to these antibiotics in the form of producing ESBL.

In other cases, people pick up ESBL positive bacteria from their surroundings – often in a healthcare setting.

What happens after I'm treated?

If you have an infection due to an ESBL positive bacteria you will be treated with appropriate antibiotics until you are feeling better.

Even after your infection has been treated you may continue to carry ESBL positive bacteria in places where they will not make you feel unwell, such as your bowels. This is called “colonisation” and does not need to be treated.

However, if you feel unwell in the future, it is important to let staff involved in your care know you have previously had an ESBL positive infection as the same bacteria may be the cause of this.

What do I need to do in the future?

If you feel well

When feeling well and out of the hospital you do not need to do anything beyond practising good hand-washing technique and maintaining good bathroom hygiene.

If you feel unwell

If you feel unwell and attend your GP, it is important to tell them that you have previously had an ESBL positive infection, as this may influence any antibiotics they prescribe if you have a bacterial infection.

If you're admitted to hospital

If you are ever admitted to hospital, it is important to tell staff that you have previously had an ESBL positive infection as you may be given a side room and this may affect choice of antibiotics if you have an infection.

If you're pregnant

If pregnant, it is important to tell either midwifery or medical staff that you have had an ESBL positive infection. This may change the choice of antibiotic for either you or your baby in the event of any infection.

This leaflet is also available in large print.

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Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call 01224 554149 to let us know.