

Extended spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01392 402093 or at rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services) or on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net (for North Devon services).

What is Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase?

Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL) is an enzyme produced by certain bacteria which can destroy some antibiotics (e.g. penicillins and cephalosporins) rendering them ineffective. Therefore, infections involving ESBL-producing bacteria may be difficult to treat.

Where do these bacteria come from?

The bacteria that produce ESBL live in the bowel of both healthy and sick people.

When ESBL travels to other parts of your body it may cause localised infections, often in urine, but sometimes in wounds or in blood. It is possible for ESBL to live in your body without causing infection; this is called colonisation. People who carry ESBL do not look or feel different from anyone else and may not have any symptoms.

How is it spread?

ESBL is spread on the hands after contact with a person carrying ESBL bacteria, or contaminated equipment, if the hands are not cleaned properly.

Who is at risk of carrying ESBL producing bugs?

- Elderly people, over 65 years old
- Very young, premature neonates
- People with long term urinary catheters
- People taking prolonged and extensive antibiotic therapy
- People being treated for cancer

- People who have undergone organ transplantation
- People who have undergone gastrointestinal surgery

How is ESBL Treated?

The ESBL-producing bacteria may not be causing infection as they can live harmlessly in the gut (bowel). In many instances antibiotic treatment is not required.

If you have signs and symptoms of infection, antibiotics may be prescribed. Your doctor will advise you on their use. Laboratory test results will ensure that the right antibiotics at the right strength are used to treat your infection.

Antibiotics treat infections, but do not necessarily eliminate the bacteria from the body.

Whilst I'm in hospital, will anything be different about my care?

You may be moved into a single room and a sign will be placed on your room door to remind staff entering about additional precautions.

Staff will wear gloves and aprons when providing personal care and when dealing with urine and faeces to prevent spread.

What can we do to prevent ESBL from spreading?

The most important method of preventing spread is hand hygiene after you've been to the toilet and before eating.

It is important that everyone cleans their hands after having contact with you or your immediate environment in hospital. Please feel free to ask staff to provide you with hand hygiene facilities when you need them, and also prompt them or anyone else involved in your care to clean their own hands if you think they may have forgotten.

Alcohol hand gel is very effective against ESBL producing bacteria.

Will this affect my family and other visitors?

Family and friends can still visit you, including children and pregnant women.

It is not necessary for visitors to wear gloves and aprons.

It is important that all your visitors use the hand gel or soap on leaving your room or bed area.

When you are discharged home, you do not need to take any special precautions beyond your normal hygiene practices.

Further Information

If you have any questions that we have not answered in this leaflet, please ask your nurse or doctor caring for you on the ward, or contact one of the Infection Control nurses.

For Eastern services, call 01392 402355.

For Northern services, call 01271 322680.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact:

PALS Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter

- call 01392 402093 or email rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Wonford, Exeter.

PALS North Devon

- call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple.

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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