

FAQs

(frequently asked questions)

about "ESBL"

(Extended-Spectrum beta-lactamase Producing)

What is ESBL?

ESBL producing isolates are most commonly *Klebsiella* spp, predominantly *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). ESBL are found in common gram-negative bacteria. These common germs have attained resistance to certain antibiotics.

Who is most likely to get a ESBL infection?

The following persons are at increased risk of becoming infected with ESBL:

- People who have been previously treated with antibiotics for long periods of time.
- People who are hospitalized, particularly when they receive antibiotic treatment for long periods of time.
- People with weakened immune systems such as patients in Intensive Care Units, or in cancer or transplant wards.
- People who have undergone surgical procedures such as abdominal or chest surgery.
- People with medical devices that stay in for some time such as urinary catheters or central intravenous (IV) catheters.
- People who are colonized with ESBL.

How do I get a ESBL infection?

As a healthy individual you are not at risk of catching this type of infection. However, without taking proper precautions, you are at risk for spreading ESBLs to others. ESBL are acquired by the use of antibiotics. ESBL is often passed from person to person by the hands of caregivers. ESBL can get onto a caregiver's hands after they have contact with other people with ESBL or after contact with contaminated surfaces. ESBL can also be spread directly to people after they touch surfaces that are contaminated with ESBL. ESBL is not usually spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

Can ESBL infections be treated?

Yes. People who are colonized (bacteria are present, but have no symptoms of an infection) with ESBL do not usually need treatment. Laboratory testing of the ESBL can determine which antibiotics will work.

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What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent ESBL infections?

To prevent ESBL infections, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient.
- Carefully clean hospital rooms and medical equipment.
- Use Contact Precautions when caring for patients with ESBL. Contact Precautions mean:
- Whenever possible, patients with ESBL will have a single room or will share a room only with someone else who also has ESBL.
- Healthcare providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over their clothing while taking care of patients with ESBL.
- Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves.
- When leaving the room, hospital providers and visitors remove their gown and gloves and clean their hands.
- Patients on Contact Precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas, such as the gift shop or cafeteria. They may go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.

IF YOU DO NOT SEE YOUR PROVIDERS CLEAN THEIR HANDS, PLEASE ASK THEM TO DO SO.

How may I prevent the spread of ESBL?

If you or someone in your household has ESBL, the following are some things you can do to prevent the spread of ESBL:

- Keep your hands clean. Always wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom and before preparing food. Clean your hands after contact with persons who have ESBL. Wash with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rubs.
- Frequently clean areas of your home such as your bathroom that may become contaminated with ESBL.
- Wear gloves if you may come in contact with body fluids that may contain ESBL, such as stool or bandages from infected wounds. Always wash your hands after removing gloves.

If you have ESBL, be sure to tell healthcare providers caring for you that you have ESBL so that they are aware of your infection. Special precautions are used to help prevent the spread of ESBL to others.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

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