

Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamases (ESBL's)

What is an ESBL?

ESBL's are enzymes made by some germs. Germs can cause you to get sick and antibiotics are used to treat or kill these germs. When germs have ESBL's, many antibiotics do not work. Many different kinds of germs can be ESBL's, including *Klebsiella* and *E. coli*. Usually, ESBL's are harmless and live in the body without causing infection. Sometimes, ESBL's get into a part of the body where they do not belong, like the blood or urine. Then an infection may occur.

How are ESBL's spread?

ESBL's can be spread from person to person by touching body fluid (blood, urine) or items that have been in contact with the patient (stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, etc.). If a patient has an ESBL in the lungs, it can be spread by coughing, sneezing, or suctioning. ESBL's can be removed from the hands with proper hand cleaning.

How is the spread of ESBL's prevented in the hospital?

ESBL's can cause a variety of diseases, ranging from urinary tract infections to blood or wound infections. ESBL's may also "colonize" or live in a patient without causing infection. If an ESBL is in the patient's lungs, it can be spread by coughing or sneezing; then Droplet Isolation is used...this means that anyone that enters the room will wear gloves, gown, mask, and possibly eye goggles. If an ESBL is in another part of the body, for example blood, urine, wounds, etc., it could be spread by contact; then Contact Isolation is used... this means that everyone who enters the room will wear gloves and gown.

What can I do to prevent the spread of infection to others?

ESBL's can live for several days on surfaces. So, one of the **most important** things you can do is to practice good handwashing. It's OK to ask the doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers if they have cleaned their hands.

How is an ESBL infection treated?

ESBL's are often resistant to many commonly used antibiotics. Your doctor will make a decision on what is the best medicine to use.

May I walk in the hall? May I have visitors?

You may walk in the hall if it's OK with your nurse and doctor. Remember to wash your hands or use the hand gel (dispenser on wall) before you leave your room. Visitors may come to see you, but they will be asked to wear gloves, a gown, and possibly a mask. They should remove the gloves, gowns, and mask and wash their hands or use hand gel before they leave your room.

What do I do when I go home?

You do not need to do anything special at home, other than washing your hands. Family members should also wash their hands before and after caring for you. Washing your hands is the best way to prevent the spread of germs.

Any Questions?

Contact Infection Prevention & Control at 655-4789 or your doctor if you have any other questions.

Reference:

Center for Disease Control. 2005

