

# Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase (ESBL) – Patient information



## What Is ESBL?

ESBL stands for Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase. These are bacteria normally found in the bowel and the female genitourinary tract. They are relatively harmless, but can cause urinary tract and abdominal infections. E coli are normally sensitive to most antibiotics such as Augmentin but some strains have developed resistance to these antibiotics and are known as ESBL.

## What Is ESBL colonization?

If you have ESBLs in your body and it is not causing an infection you are colonized. Although you are not sick because of this bacterium you could pass it on to someone else and make them sick.

## What Is An ESBL Infection?

In people with a poor immune system these bacteria can cause infection. The type of infection and type of symptoms depend on which bacteria are causing it. Some ESBL bacteria cause urinary tract infections, wound infections, pneumonia and bloodstream infections.

## How Do I Know If I Have An ESBL?

At this time we only do routine surveillance for ESBLs in ICU, however if you are being tested for other types of bacteria we may pick this up.

## How Are ESBLs spread?

When a person has ESBL the bacteria from their bodies can contaminate surfaces such as toilets, bed rails, and commode chairs. When touching these items our hands become contaminated. If we touch our mouth without washing our hands we can become colonized or infected. This is why we must use contact precautions.

## What Are Contact Precautions?

It is very important to contain the bacteria so it does not spread to others. We do this by:

1. Accommodating ESBL patients in a single room and putting a “Contact Precautions” sign outside the door.
2. Wearing a yellow long sleeved gown and gloves when providing patient care
3. Cleaning our hands before entering the room and after leaving the room.

## What About Family And Visitors?

Family and visitors must first talk with a nurse before coming into the room. Young visitors should always be closely supervised.

- All visitors must clean hands before entering and after leaving the room using the alcohol hand rub.
- Any visitors must wear a long sleeved gown and gloves same as staff.
- Visitors must not visit other patients in the hospital during the same trip. To ensure we do not spread the disease.

## What Can I Do To Help?

- Remind all staff caring for you to clean their hands.
- Wash your hands after you use the toilet, before you eat, after blowing your nose, after touching your dressing.
- Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any questions.

## What should I do at home?

Healthy people like your family and friends are at a low risk of getting an infection from ESBLs.

- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.
- Anyone who helps you with your personal hygiene or toileting should wash their hands after contact with you
- No special cleaning or laundry precautions are needed.

## Contact the Infection Prevention Team

Footscray Hospital

Phone: 03 8345 6783

Sunshine Hospital

Phone 03 8345 0210

Williamstown & Sunbury Day Hospital

Phone 04 19 311 375

**The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights** describes the rights of all people who use the Australian healthcare system. Copies of the charter in community languages are available near the main entrance of all Western Health hospitals, or ask a staff member or volunteer.

For more information, visit [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/australian-charter-healthcare-rights](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/australian-charter-healthcare-rights)



**Author:** Infection Control  
**Date:** February 2020  
**Next Review:** (3 years from date)  
**Version Control:** v1



This material has been developed in partnership with Western Health consumers.

