

## About extended spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

### What is Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase?

Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL) is an enzyme produced by some bacteria, which destroys some antibiotics. Therefore infections involving ESBL-producing bacteria may be difficult to treat.

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.

### Are some people more at risk than others?

Most infections occur in people with other underlying medical conditions, who are already very poorly, and in elderly people. Patients who have previously been in hospital or been taking antibiotics may also be affected.

### How does it spread?

ESBL is spread on the hands of patients, relatives and health care workers after contact with a person carrying ESBL bacteria or contaminated equipment, if the hands are not washed properly.

### How we prevent ESBL from spreading

ESBL can spread to other patients, so to reduce the risk of this happening staff follow standard infection control practices which include:

- washing their hands or using alcohol gel before and after attending to every patient
- wearing gloves and aprons when giving some aspects of personal care
- cleaning all equipment thoroughly after use

## How can it be treated?

Patients who have an ESBL infection may have signs and symptoms such as a high temperature. Many different germs can produce the same signs and symptoms, but laboratory tests will identify which one is causing the infection.

If these tests prove positive for ESBL, the nurses will reassess the best place to look after you. Depending on your condition, you may be nursed in a single room, but occasionally patients are cared for in a bay on the main ward.

Laboratory test results will ensure that the right antibiotics at the right strength are used to treat your infection.

## Will it affect my family and friends?

Family and friends may still visit you. However, they will be encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water or use alcohol gel before leaving. This is particularly important if they are helping with your care. Cleansing hands is a standard infection prevention practice and is encouraged for all visitors regardless of who they are visiting.

When you are discharged home, there are no special precautions required beyond normal hygiene practices.

## Further information

If you have any queries, please ask the ward staff or contact the Infection Prevention & Control Department: **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 call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS 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.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust  
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple  
Devon EX31 4JB  
Tel. 01271 322577  
[www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk)

© Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust  
This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.  
Tel: 01271 313970 / email: [ndht.communications@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.communications@nhs.net)