

ESBLs

ESBLs (Extended-spectrum Betalactamase) are common antibiotic-resistant bacteria known as 'superbugs'. They can cause infection.

Superbugs are resistant to many antibiotics. This means that some antibiotics that were used to treat them no longer work very well.

How you get ESBL

ESBLs are common in Ireland and many other countries. They're found in some animals, as well as rivers and streams.

ESBL is a common bug among people who spend a lot of time in hospital. This is because lots of people carry superbugs in hospital. This makes it easier for them to spread.

There's often no way of knowing where or when you picked it up.

Most of the time ESBLs are harmless and do not cause infection. If they stay in your gut, they will not make you sick. ESBLs can also spread harmlessly to other areas of the body. This is called colonisation.

Important

ESBLs can cause a serious infection if they get into your blood, kidneys, bladder or body tissues.

Preventing the spread of ESBL

To stop getting and spreading ESBL:

- [clean your hands often](#)
- clean your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet, before eating and before touching raw meat
- use your own soap, flannel, sponge and razor

If you are in hospital:

- limit contact with patients and keep away from their bed space
- avoid sharing food, newspapers or other personal items with patients
- tell staff if facilities in a hospital or clinic are not clean

⚠ If you know you carry ESBLs

Tell the doctor when you make an appointment and when you get to the surgery or hospital. If you're in hospital, you might need to stay in your own room or a ward with people who carry ESBLs.

If you carry ESBLs, this should not get in the way of your normal home life. ESBL does not spread as quickly outside of hospital. It's also less likely to harm people well enough to be at home.

You do not need to limit contact with anyone. You also do not need to tell friends or family that you have ESBLs.

Symptoms of ESBL infection

Symptoms are a lot like symptoms of other serious infections.

Symptoms of ESBL include:

- a high temperature
- aches and pains
- chills
- tiredness
- weakness
- confusion

Causes of ESBL infection

ESBLs are more likely to cause infection in people who are already very sick.

Things that put you at higher risk of ESBL infection include:

- major surgery
- having a medical device inserted into your body, such as a catheter or IV line
- cancer treatment

Treatment of ESBL infection

If you have an ESBL infection, you can be treated with a specific type of [antibiotics](#). Common antibiotics usually will not work.

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