Extended Spectrum Beta-Lactamase (ESBL), AmpC and K1

What are ESBL, Amp C or K1?

These are enzymes, produced by bacteria, which destroy some antibiotics. Therefore infections involving these may be difficult to treat.

The bacteria that produce these enzymes live in the bowel of both healthy and sick people. It is only when they travel to other parts of your body that they cause infections, usually in urine, but sometimes in wounds or in blood. People who have been taking antibiotics are more likely to become infected.

It is possible for the bacteria that produce these enzymes to live in your body without causing infection, this is called colonisation.

How does it spread?

On the hands of patients, relatives and healthcare workers after contact with an infected person, or equipment, if the hands are not washed properly.

What happens if I catch it?

You may be:

- moved to a single room to help prevent the infection from spreading
- given specific antibiotics to treat the infection.

How can I avoid it?

You can remind staff to wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol hand rub before and after they care for you.

What about my visitors?

It would help if your visitors wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol hand rub when they arrive and before they leave the ward. This is particularly important if they are helping with your care.

It is important that visitors do not sit or lie on your bed.

Will I have to stay in hospital longer?

If you need treatment with antibiotics you may have to stay in hospital longer. If you do not need treatment, you will be able to go home when you are well enough.

What happens when I get home?

No special precautions are needed. Usual personal hygiene and household cleaning is enough.

Further information

About infections is available from:

Infection Control: 01872 254969

Public Health England: 01392 354810

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690