



ESBL Factsheet

Bacteria that produce enzymes called **extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBLs)** are resistant to many penicillin and cephalosporin antibiotics and often to other types of antibiotic.

The 2 main bacteria that produce ESBLs are Escherichia coli (E. coli) and Klebsiella species.

E. coli with ESBLs may cause urinary tract infections (UTIs) that can sometimes progress to more serious infections like blood poisoning, which can be life threatening. Resistance makes these infections more difficult to treat.

Extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)-producing E. coli are antibiotic-resistant strains of E. coli.

E. coli are very common bacteria that normally live harmlessly in the gut. ESBL-producing strains are bacteria that produce an enzyme called an extended-spectrum beta-lactamase, which makes them more resistant to antibiotics and makes the infections harder to treat. In many instances, only two oral antibiotics and a very limited group of intravenous antibiotics remain effective.

Most of the infections have occurred in people with other underlying medical conditions who are already very sick, and in elderly people. Patients who have been taking antibiotics or who have been previously hospitalised are mainly affected.

Robust infection control measures are always important to prevent the spread of infection. These include interventions, such as, hand washing and patient isolation. It is also important to ensure that antibiotics are prescribed only when needed, in the right dose, for the right duration, so as to reduce resistance developing in bacteria.