

Understanding ESBL E. coli: Preventing the spread of infection in the home

There are many different forms of the germ E. coli. You've probably heard of the type that causes food poisoning but there are also strains that can cause infection of the urinary tract such as ESBL E. coli. This type of E. coli is difficult to treat with antibiotics so it is important to reduce the opportunities for the germ to spread from person to person in the home and community.

E. coli – the facts:

- E. coli are bacteria that are found in large numbers in the gut of all healthy humans
- There are many different strains of E. coli with different characteristics, all of which are circulating in the community, sometimes evolving into new strains
- Some new E. coli strains are emerging that are antibiotic resistant, such as ESBL E.coli. Though the symptoms are no more severe, this makes the infections they cause very difficult to treat
- ESBL E. coli mainly infects the urinary tract, but can lead to blood poisoning or meningitis. Though it may travel on food, it does not seem to cause food poisoning.
- Infection of the urinary tract normally comes from germs already in a person's own bowel.
- Stopping urinary tract infection with ESBL E. coli depends on avoiding self-infection through good personal hygiene, but the less it spreads and sets up home in different people's bowels, the better.
- The most likely sources of ESBL E. coli in the home are people, food and possibly pets
- E. coli gets into the bowel through the mouth by water or food, or by direct hand-to-mouth transfer

ESBL E. coli – what are the risks?

- For otherwise healthy people the risks of becoming ill with ESBL E. coli are very small, but since there are people in homes and the community who may become infected more easily, the less this bug spreads the better.
- People who are already sick and have a weaker immune system, or a urinary catheter for example, are most at risk of becoming infected with ESBL E. coli.
- Women are also at a higher risk of urinary tract infections caused by ESBL E. coli because their urethra is shorter in length.
- The main concern is that if ESBL strains are allowed to become more common, more and more urinary tract and consequent infections will be difficult to treat

.Preventing the spread of E. coli in the home:

ESBL E. coli infections generally arise from germs in the person's own bowel, and will not transmit directly to cause a urinary tract infection in others. So the key to reducing the

opportunity for E.coli ESBL to make people ill is to reduce the circulation of this germ in the healthy community by everyday 'clever cleaning'.

Everyday 'Clever Cleaning'
Wash hands thoroughly before and after preparing food, handling raw meat and after going to the toilet
Clean kitchen surfaces using a bleach based product such as Domestos Bleach Cleaning Spray before handling or preparing food
Clean surfaces in the bathroom and toilet including sinks, baths and toilet bowls, toilet seats and toilet handles using a bleach-based product like Domestos Thick Bleach, diluted with water
Soak cleaning cloths in bleach to kill any germs living on them
Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched by different people, such as door handles, telephones, light switches etc

To stop ESBL E. coli spreading and break the chain of infection, wash your hands frequently and use a bleach-based product, such as Domestos Bleach Cleaning Spray, to clean and disinfect the places in your home that germs use to travel.

Bleach is the only household product that will kill all germs on contact, including all types of E. coli