

## Information to carriers of ESBL bacteria

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A strain of gut bacteria resistant to treatment with commonly used antibiotics has been detected in your sample. These bacteria produce an enzyme known as ESBL. These ESBL bacteria differ from the normal bacteria found in the gut of all people in that they are resistant to most antibiotics. In individuals without any symptoms, ESBL bacteria may be found e.g. in the gut, in a wound or in the urine without causing any dis-ease. Antibiotics are not used to treat carriers with no symptoms; many antibiotics may in fact prolong the carriage.

### Carriers of ESBL E.coli bacteria in hospitals and other healthcare units

Severely ill patients are more prone to infections caused by ESBL bacteria, which may cause conditions such as urinary tract infection, wound infection or sepsis. The bacteria might be transmitted from one person to another through hands or the use of shared sanitary facilities. As a result, you may be treated in hospital in a private room if you have urinary or faecal incontinence or chronic wounds. Being an ESBL carrier must not prevent or delay access to care, examinations or rehabilitation.

Good hand hygiene is the most important means of preventing the spread of bacteria. At home, washing the hands carefully with water and liquid soap is sufficient. Hands must be dried with a personal hand towel. In hospital, hand sanitiser is used in addition to washing the hands. All hygiene articles such as razors, hairbrushes, skin creams, wound care articles or the like are for personal use only. As part of normal hygiene, a separate hand towel should be available for guests. The fact that you are a carrier will be entered in your medical journal as a so-called Infection Risk Flag. This will inform healthcare staff of your carrier status when you are admitted to hospital. This is important not only for preventing infections, but for you as well, since the information may help doctors to select the right antibiotic if you contract an infection with fever. As stipulated by the Communicable Diseases Act, the infection unit of Satakunta Hospital District maintains a register of carriers. All carriers of resistant bacteria are entered in the register. In accordance with the Act, your local health centre will also be informed of your carrier status.

### ESBL carriage does not prevent normal interaction with other people

Intestinal ESBL bacteria have gradually become more common in the population, and there are people who are carriers without being aware of it. You may become infected by eating or drinking contaminated food or water, especially when travelling abroad, but also in Finland. Some individuals cease to be carriers without any treatment. According to new guidelines issued by the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the hospital district, the Infection Risk Flag may be cancelled if there are no specific risk factors present and the patient has not had any infections caused by ESBL bacteria within a year of last being diagnosed. However, the risk flag may not be cancelled if your immunity is compromised or if you have chronic skin ulcers or faecal or urinary incontinence.

### Contact information

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