Enterobacter spp. are motile Gram-negative bacilli that produce ornithine decarboxylase and are urease negative. These features distinguish them from Klebsiella spp. Enterobacter spp. are ubiquitous organisms found in human and animal faeces and in the environment, including water, plants and plant materials.

Of the 14 species, Enterobacter aerogenes and Enterobacter cloacae are the most commonly isolated and are particularly important nosocomial pathogens in the ICU. They cause a variety of infections including bacteraemia, pneumonia, urinary tract and surgical wound infections. The most frequently cited risk factor for Enterobacter infection is prior exposure to antibiotics. It appears that the combination of severe debility and the effect of antibiotics on normal flora provide a selective environment favouring colonisation and subsequent infection with Enterobacter spp. The majority of infections are likely to be endogenous in origin from chronically colonised patients, which implies that infection control practices are unlikely to have a major effect on the overall incidence of Enterobacter infection.