

Love of antibiotics is destroying their power

By Danielle Paquette, Washington Post

When our throats burn, we're conditioned to reach for antibiotics. When our noses run, we hound doctors for antibiotics. When we're too groggy to drive to the doctor, we search our medicine cabinets for leftover antibiotics.

Four out of five Americans are prescribed the drugs every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Up to half of the estimated 258 million prescriptions are unnecessary, the agency reports.

"We need a total culture change," said Jesse Goodman, director of Georgetown University's Center on Medical Product Access, Safety and Stewardship and a former FDA chief scientist. "Patient and doctor must understand these drugs are precious resources. The more we use them, and the more unwisely, the more resistance."

President Obama announced a plan this week to nearly double the amount of federal funding dedicated to fighting antibiotic-resistant bacteria, a national health threat the CDC says annually causes an estimated 2 million illnesses and 23,000 deaths. The president will ask Congress for \$1.2 billion as part of his annual budget request. Funds would be used to hasten the development of antibiotics and diagnostic tools, heighten surveillance for "superbugs" and curb the spread of antibiotic-resistant microbes in medical settings.

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