

Cuts in antibacterial soap use sought

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Officials in Cook County, Ill., have asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce the widespread use of antibacterial agents in soaps.

The chemicals are of "no proven benefit to public health," says Terrence J. O'Brien, president of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.

In fact, some experts worry the compounds might contribute to the growing problem of germs developing resistance to antibiotic drugs, the Chicago Sun-Times reports.

The American Medical Association and Association for Professionals in Infection Control have said there's no evidence that antibacterial soaps prevent infections in homes. The antimicrobial compounds are used in three-quarters of all liquid soaps and nearly a third of bar soaps, the newspaper says.

After people flush them down the drain, about 75 percent of the triclocarban and triclosan compounds survive treatment at sewage plants and end up in waterways and as sludge spread on farm fields, one study found.

The Soap and Detergent Association says exposure to triclocarban has no effects on animals or aquatic life and poses no known threat to humans.

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