

US aims to cut antibiotic use

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Various pills. Credit: Wikipedia

US President Barack Obama on Friday rolled out plans to cut inappropriate antibiotic use by half, in an effort to tackle drug resistance.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [drug-resistant bacteria](#), also known as "superbugs," kill 23,000 people a year in the United States.

"Antibiotic resistance is one of the most pressing public health issues facing the world today," Obama told Internet health portal WebMD.

To reduce the toll, the new plan aims to cut inappropriate antibiotic use by 50 percent for outpatients, and 20 percent for inpatients.

Measures include developing diagnostic tests to determine whether an infection is bacterial or viral.

"Over-prescribing is a serious problem," Obama said. "We need to give doctors the information and guidance they need to make the right call in hard situations."

The plan would also encourage the development of new antibiotics.

But critics say measures fail to tackle one major source of antibiotic over use: farming.

"The Obama Administration needs to do more to reduce antibiotic use in animals that are not sick," the Natural Resources Defense Council said.

"Our government should be taking steps to reduce antibiotics to protect our health, rather than protecting poor industry practices."

The plan may also hit funding problems. Obama needs Republicans in Congress to back a budget that pays for the measures.

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