

WANT N95 MASK? GET DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

In a new mandate to curb unnecessary demand, the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Friday said chemists cannot sell N95 masks without a doctor's prescription.

The FDA also warned that serious action would be taken against those who were found selling masks at high prices or hoarding them.

“Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits and N95 masks are being sold at very high prices in medical shops. The State has received many complaints about the same. It has also been found that many are making bulk purchases and hoarding PPE kits and N95 masks,” FDA commissioner Arun Unhale stated in his circular, adding that it is now compulsory to sell the kits and masks only on doctors prescription.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak in China, shortage of PPE gear and masks has been reported from across the world.

While the Indian government has currently banned exports of N95 masks, the manufacturers are focussed on making other surgical masks to get good returns from exports.

Health officials have clarified that N95 masks should be worn by healthcare workers, infected persons and those taking care of infected persons.

Unnecessary rush

Abhay Pandey of All Food and Drug Licence Holders Foundation said the prescription clause will lead to unnecessary rush for doctors consultations.

“The government should instead mandate that each mask should be sold with a bill so that an FDA scrutiny can be done and action can be initiated against those who are hoarding or selling it at high prices,” he said.

Meanwhile, the State has advised to postpone any kind of mass gatherings till the spread of the virus is contained and have also started screening at the Pune and Nagpur airports.

Some employers in malls, theatres, and restaurants have begun taking precautions by keeping hand sanitisers available and offering masks to employees. For example, Growel's 101 Mall has provided three-layer face masks for staff at key points like security, parking, housekeeping, and horticulture and have also provided hand sanitisers.

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