

COVID-19 Update: Availability of PPE kits, N95 masks and ventilators

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The prevention, containment and management of COVID-19 in the country are being monitored at the highest level and various actions have been initiated in collaboration with the States. In order to meet the requirement of PPEs, masks and ventilators, factories producing essential items are working round the clock and ordinance factories are trying to produce personal protection equipment for medical personnel. While Bharat Electronics Limited is going to manufacture ventilators, all drug companies have assured the government that there will not be any shortage of drugs during this crisis and even auto manufacturers are working to develop and produce ventilators. Medical personnel are being trained and are fully prepared for any emergencies.

Personal protection equipment (PPE) kits are used by medical personnel working in isolation areas and intensive care units to protect them from acquiring infections. They were not being manufactured in the country. With the prospect of huge requirement of PPEs arising in the near future, the Government of India made proactive efforts to promote their manufacturing in the country.

Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have been working together in this endeavour. Domestic manufacturers rose to the occasion and so far 11 manufacturers have cleared quality tests. Orders for 21 lakh PPE coveralls have been placed on them. Currently they are supplying 6-7,000 coveralls per day and this is expected to go up to 15,000 per day within the next week. One more manufacturer has qualified today and an order of 5 lakh coveralls has been placed with him.

As of now, 3.34 lakh PPEs are available in various hospitals across the country. About 60,000 PPE kits have already been procured and supplied by Government of India. Indian Red cross society has arranged 10,000 PPEs from China which have also been received and are being distributed. Another 3 lakh donated PPE coveralls are to arrive by 4th April. An order for 3 lakh PPEs has been placed with ordinance factories.

Foreign sources of PPE kits are also faced with a huge increase in the worldwide demand. They are being approached through the Ministry of External Affairs. A Singapore based online platform has been identified which can supply 10 lakh PPE kits and an order has been placed through Ministry of External Affairs to procure them. Another supplier based in Korea, who has tie ups with production companies in Vietnam and Turkey has been identified with daily production capacity of over 1 lakh PPE kits. Orders are being placed on this company through MEA for supplying 20 lakh PPE kits.

N95 masks are being manufactured by two domestic producers. They are able to supply 50,000 masks per day at the moment, but are ramping up capacities to make 1 lakh masks per day within the next week. DRDO is also collaborating with local manufacturers to produce about 20,000 N99 masks per day. This supply is also expected to become available in a week's time.

Hospitals in the country have 11.95 lakh N95 masks in stock as of now. Additional 5 lakh masks were distributed in the past two days and 1.40 lakh masks are being distributed today. 10 lakh masks would be part of the PPE kits being sourced from Singapore.

Ventilators are required for Covid-19 patients, as they tend to develop acute respiratory disease syndrome (ARDS). Less than 20 covid-19 patients are on ventilator support at this moment. As against this, over 14,000 ventilators have been identified in various hospitals across the country for treatment of covid-19 patients.

A domestic manufacturer Agva Healthcare in Noida has been able to develop suitable ventilators and an order of 10,000 ventilators has been placed on him. Supplies are expected to commence by the 2nd week of April. In addition, an order for 30,000 ventilators has been placed on Bharat Electronics Limited which is

going to collaborate with domestic manufacturers in this endeavour. Indian Auto manufacturers are also preparing to manufacture ventilators.

In the meantime, orders have been placed on international companies like Hamilton, Mindray and Draeger to supply ventilators. Ministry of External Affairs is also approaching suppliers in China for sourcing 10,000 ventilators from them.

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