



Free N95 masks for vulnerable Singaporeans: who qualifies and where

Description

Singapore began giving out free N95 masks to vulnerable residents on 14 October, earlier than planned, after the 1-hour PM_{2.5} reading in the west hit the Very High band for the first time this haze season. NEA's [haze situation update](#) says the phased distribution started because PM_{2.5} levels reached the Very High range and the 24-hour PSI could enter the Very Unhealthy range.

The Haze Task Force had announced on 9 October that masks would go out only once the 24-hour PSI crossed 200. On Wednesday afternoon the 1-hour PM_{2.5} reading in the west reached 284 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at 2pm and 288 at 3pm. By 10pm, the 24-hour PSI in the west had reached 204, in the Very Unhealthy range.

Who can collect, and where

Masks come in packs of two and are collected with the eligible person's NRIC. A family member or friend can collect on their behalf using that NRIC.

These groups can collect at community clubs or at haze mask vending machines at selected public transport hubs, Social Service Offices and People's Association venues:

- Pioneer Generation
- Merdeka Generation
- CHAS Orange and CHAS Blue card holders
- Medical Fee Exemption Card holders
- ComCare Assistance recipients

These groups can collect at community clubs only:

- Pregnant women
- Children aged 7 to 16
- People with medical conditions such as asthma

Stock is arriving in stages. NEA says masks may not be immediately available at every location, and the vending machines are being deployed across the island from the evening of 14 October, with stocks replenished regularly. The HazeMaskGoWhere site at go.gov.sg/hazemask, built by MSE with GovTech and the People's Association, lists eligibility, collection points and live stock at each vending machine. Check it before you head out.

Retail shelves may run short, but NEA says retailers' warehouses and government stockpiles hold sufficient N95 masks, and the Haze Task Force is working with retailers to restock.

Who should wear one

An N95 is not needed for every trip outside. The government's guidance:

- Vulnerable people, including the elderly, pregnant women and those with chronic heart or lung disease, may wear an N95 when the air quality forecast is Very Unhealthy (PSI above 200) and they must be outdoors for several hours.
- Healthy people who must be outdoors for several hours when the forecast is Hazardous (PSI above 300) may wear one with a good fit.
- The elderly, pregnant women and anyone with severe lung or heart problems who has difficulty breathing at rest or on exertion should consult a doctor first.
- Anyone who feels discomfort in an N95 should take a break from it.

The Haze Task Force has said N95 masks are generally not required for short outdoor exposure, such as the commute to school or work, or indoors. Fit matters: a mask that does not seal against the face lets haze particles in around the edges.

Haze shelters are open

Air-conditioned rooms in community clubs and selected Residents' Committee and Residents' Network centres are now haze shelters, open to anyone who needs relief. Call your nearest community club for its hours. If the 24-hour PSI enters the Hazardous range, shelters at community clubs will stay open until 10pm.

What happens next

NEA forecasts the 24-hour PSI for 15 October in the Unhealthy to Very Unhealthy range, with dense smoke from fires in Kalimantan expected to keep drifting towards Singapore on southeasterly winds. Under the [MOH health advisory](#), at Very Unhealthy levels healthy people should avoid prolonged or strenuous outdoor exertion, and the elderly, pregnant women, children and people with chronic lung or heart disease should minimise or avoid outdoor activity.

Schools follow their own thresholds. MOE has said it will consider closing schools when the next day's 24-hour PSI is forecast to exceed 300.

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