

Air purifiers no longer preserve of rich

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New Delhi: Multi-brand showrooms in the capital have been teaching their sales staff terms like HEPA (high-efficiency particulate arrestance) and CADR (clean air delivery rate) lately. There has been an increased interest among consumers to buy air purifiers in the wake of severe air pollution in Delhi, and the showrooms don't want to be found wanting.

Air purifiers were previously the sole preserve of the high and mighty, and foreign diplomatic missions. Today, the upper middle-class consumer has joined the clientele too. Sanjeev Batra, owner of Batra Electricals in Lajpat Nagar's Central Market, says there has been a 50% increase in enquiries about air purifiers. "Earlier, we would sell two pieces in two months. We didn't even have a catalogue of products. Now we have brought some. But I think these units are costly. Middle-class families can't afford units worth Rs.50,000," he says.

But Sunil Kumar of Arvee Sales in the same area has a different opinion. "We

have seen a 50% hike in sales. We have chest specialists from Gangaram and Moolchand advising patients to use air purifiers. It's good for those with respiratory problems," he says. He shows an array of brands in his showroom and lists out their features—plasma clusters, electrostatic filters etc.

Komal, a saleswoman at

Vijay Sales, says she has exceeded her sales target in the past three months. "Previously, only foreigners would come. Now, Delhiites too come. I sold five in October, nine in November and three in just four days of this month," she says.

Each of the catalogues specify the accreditation they carry, if any, of US-

based AHAM (Association of Home Appliances Manufacturers), the room size it is ideal for and the CADR it delivers. Prices vary depending on capacity.

Santosh Singh, a salesman at Jeevanjee Refrigeration Engineers, has products from a particular brand on display. "I sold 35 of these just yesterday. At the same price

you get another company's purifier. But it releases ions into the air which is not good," he says.

Cost and efficacy remain the primary concerns with respect to air purifiers in India as we have no standard accreditation agency, leaving customers to independently verify the tall claims of manufacturers.

BREATHING EASY AT HOME

WHAT IS AN AIR PURIFIER?

An electronic device that filters pollutants such as dust mites, PM 2.5, cigarette smoke, pet hair, viruses, bacteria, pollen and mould. It's supposed to be beneficial for those with respiratory diseases, senior citizens and homes with infants. Costs range from ₹14,000 to ₹50,000, and those for residential use are compact and portable, sometimes matching home interiors



Filters | Remove large particles like dust, mites, pollen, hair, pet fur. Some home heating and cooling systems come with filters

Ionising purifiers

| They ionise pollutants so that they get heavier and settle down

Adsorbents | These trap larger pollutants

HEPA | To qualify as HEPA (high-efficiency particulate arrestance) by US government standards, an air filter must remove 99.97% of particles that have a size of 0.3 µm from air that passes through it

Ozone generators | Not scientifically proven, but it exposes air to UV light that causes oxygen to form ozone or free oxygen that some claim disinfects the air. But ozone can be harmful

UV light | Renders airborne bacteria powerless

HOW THESE WORK

A typical air purifier has pre-filter, carbon and HEPA filters. Pre-filter screens large pollutants like dust and pollen; carbon filter removes formaldehyde and total volatile organic compounds; HEPA filter removes fine particulate matter



GRADING | As India lacks accrediting agencies, one can compare models if products have the US-based Association of Home Appliances Manufacturers' certification based on clean air delivery rate

Pros

Though there is no empirical study that establishes a direct link between usage of air purifiers to betterment in health, those suffering from respiratory problems often choose to buy them

Cons

Release of ozone and ions in the air by the purifiers can do more harm than good

WHAT IS THE IDEAL NUMBER?

There is no yardstick to measure how many purifiers are ideal to keep a home pollutant-free