

How to Use Your Peak Flow Meter

Why do peak flow readings?

The peak flow meter (PFM) is a device that measures how well air moves out of your lungs. When you have an asthma episode, the airways of your lungs begin to narrow. The PFM can tell if there is narrowing before you may be aware of symptoms. By taking medicine early (before symptoms), you may be able to stop an episode before it becomes more serious.

The PFM can also be used by you and your health care provider to:

- Learn what makes your asthma worse (triggers).
- Decide if your treatment plan is working well.
- Decide when to add or stop medicines.
- Decide when to seek emergency care.

How to use your peak flow meter:

1. Place the indicator at the "0" mark of the numbered scale.
2. Stand up.
3. Take a deep breath.
4. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips around it. Do not put your tongue in the hole.
5. Blow as hard and as fast as you can in a single blow.

Repeat steps 1 through 5 three times and write down the highest of the 3 numbers achieved.

Your "personal best"

Your "personal best" is the highest peak flow number that you can achieve over a 2-3 week period when your asthma is under good control and you do not have any asthma symptoms.

To establish your personal best, ideally do peak flow readings once a day, preferably at the same time each day, and anytime you need to take your B2-agonist to relieve symptoms.

Each patient's asthma is different, and your best peak flow reading may be higher or lower than the reading of someone else your height, weight, and gender. This is why it is important to find the "personal" best because the treatment plan is based on it.

The peak flow zone system

Once your "personal best" is established, the peak flow numbers are put into zones that are set up like a traffic light. This is your Personal Action Plan and will help you to know what to do when your peak flow reading changes.

green zone (80% to 100% of your personal best)
Signals good control. No asthma symptoms are present and you may take your medicines as usual.

yellow zone (50% to <80% of your personal best)
Signals caution. Your asthma is not under good day-to-day control and you may require an increase in your medicines.

red zone (<50% of your personal best)
Signals a **medical alert**. You must take a "quick relief" medicine right away and call your health care provider immediately if your peak flow number does not return to the yellow or green zone and stay there.

*Rate Symptoms: 0=absent 1=mild 2=moderate 3=severe											Date							
												Time	Peak Flow Reading	Wheeze	Cough	Short of Breath	Trouble at Night	Additional Medications Used

REMEMBER!

Peak flow readings are only one part of how to figure out how your asthma is doing. Pay attention to your symptoms too.

If there is active wheezing and doing your peak flow at that time is making you feel worse, call your health care provider.

As you grow taller, your lungs (and your child's lungs) will get bigger and the "zones" will change.

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asthma action plan



**ALL CLEAR**

green zone

This is where you should be everyday.

Peak Flow _____ to _____
(80% - 100% of best)

YOU SHOULD...

- ✓ have no signs of asthma
- ✓ be able to do normal activities
- ✓ have no problems while sleeping

1. TAKE YOUR PREVENTIVE MEDICATIONS EVERY DAY

Medication	How Much	When

2. AVOID YOUR ASTHMA TRIGGERS

**CAUTION**

yellow zone

Take these actions to get your asthma under control.

Peak Flow _____ to _____
(50% - 80% of best)

EARLY WARNING SIGN

- ✓ coughing
- ✓ wheezing
- ✓ tightness of chest
- ✓ tightness of breath
- ✓ unable to sleep at night

1. TAKE YOUR PREVENTIVE MEDICATIONS EVERY DAY

Medication	How Much	When

2. REPEAT PEAK FLOW 15 MINUTES AFTER TAKING PREVENTATIVE MEDICATION

If you are not having any signs of asthma and your peak flow is in the **green zone**, keep taking your green zone medications.

- Call your doctor** (Ph# _____) if:
- You still have signs of asthma after STEP 1, or if your peak flow is still in the **yellow zone**.
 - You need "quick relief" medications sooner than every four (4) hours.
 - You need "quick relief" medications every four (4) hours for more than 24 hours.

YELLOW ZONE

**DANGER**

red zone

This is an Emergency. Take these actions.

Peak Flow _____ to _____
(below 50% of best)

LATE WARNING SIGNS:

- ✓ a lot of difficulty breathing
- ✓ trouble talking or walking
- ✓ constant coughing
- ✓ use neck and stomach muscles to breathe
- ✓ ribs show when breathing
- ✓ "quick relief" medications don't help
- ✓ lips or nails blue

1. TAKE YOUR "QUICK RELIEF" MEDICATION

Medication	How Much	When

2. REPEAT PEAK FLOW IN 5 MINUTES

- X If peak flow is over, and you feel better, you are now in the **yellow zone**.
- X **Call your doctor** (Ph# _____) and ask what to do next.
- X If you are unable to blow your peak flow, or if your peak flow is _____, or less, or you are having late warning signs... you are still in the **red zone** and you must see a doctor!
- X **Go to the emergency room or call 911.**

RED ZONE