

# Peak Flow Meter

## What is a peak flow meter?

A peak flow meter is a device that measures air movement out of your lungs. During an asthma attack, the airways of the lungs begin to narrow. A peak flow meter can be used to determine if there is narrowing in the airways before your asthma symptoms begin. By taking your asthma medications early (before symptoms start), you may be able to stop the attack quickly and possibly avoid a serious asthma attack. Peak flow meters are used to monitor your airflow similar to the way blood pressure cuffs are used to check for changes in blood pressure.

## Why should I use a peak flow meter?

A peak flow meter can be used to help you and your doctor:

- Decide if your medications are working well
- Decide when to add or stop asthma medications
- Decide when to seek emergency care
- Identify possible asthma triggers, such as an animal, pollen, etc.

## How to use a peak flow meter

1. Place the pointer at the bottom of the numbered scale (set it to zero).
2. Stand or sit up straight.
3. Take a deep breath, filling your lungs completely.
4. Place the meter in your mouth and close your lips around the mouthpiece. DO NOT put your tongue inside the hole.
5. Blow out as hard and as fast as you can.
6. Write down the number indicated by the pointer.
7. Repeat steps 1 through 6 two more times.
8. Write down the highest of the three numbers in your peak flow diary.

## How to determine your personal best

Your personal best value is determined by recording peak flow values for two weeks while your asthma is under good control. Your personal best is the highest number recorded during that two-week period. Once a personal best value is established, your **GREEN**, **YELLOW**, and **RED** zones can be determined. You may initially be given a target or predicted value while you are determining your personal best. Once you know your personal best number, you should use this number instead of the predicted value.

## How to use the peak flow zone system

Once you know your personal best peak flow number, your Green, Yellow, and Red peak flow zones can be determined. The peak flow numbers are put into zones to help you know what to do when your peak flow number changes. The zones can help guide you to better manage your asthma. You should also be aware of your symptoms even if your peak flow numbers are good.

### \_\_\_\_\_ **GREEN ZONE** (80-100% of your personal best)=**All Clear**

- ❑ No asthma symptoms are present and you should take your routine medications as usual.

### \_\_\_\_\_ **YELLOW ZONE** (50-80% of your personal best)=**Caution**

- ❑ You may be having an asthma attack that requires an increase in your medications or your asthma may not be under good day-to-day control.
- ❑ Begin scheduled quick-reliever medications (albuterol 2 to 4 puffs every 4 hours until either symptoms or peak flow readings improve, or for 24 to 48 hours).
- ❑ If symptoms and peak flow readings **do not** improve within 6 hours, or if they continue to worsen despite treatment, **CALL YOUR DOCTOR.**

### \_\_\_\_\_ **RED ZONE** (<50% of your personal best)=**Medical Alert**

- ❑ Use 2 to 4 puffs of your quick-reliever (albuterol) every 20 minutes for up to 1 hour (3 doses) and **CALL YOUR DOCTOR.**
- ❑ If your peak flow readings **do not** return to the yellow or green zones within 1 hour, or if severe symptoms persist, **CALL YOUR DOCTOR AND / OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM—THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.**

### Call your doctor and/or go to the nearest Emergency Room if:

- ❑ Your lips or fingernails are blue.
- ❑ You are struggling to breathe.
- ❑ You have trouble walking or talking.

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