

Peak flow: an early warning system

Since your peak flow score often drops before you recognize any symptoms, you can use it as an early warning system for asthma flare-ups.

HOW TO MONITOR YOUR PEAK FLOW

Your health care provider may request that you regularly monitor your **peak flow**, which tells how quickly you can blow air out of your lungs. Your peak flow can tell you a lot about how well your lungs are working—and how well your asthma is controlled. Peak flow is measured using an inexpensive, handheld device called a **peak flow meter**.

HOW TO MEASURE YOUR PEAK FLOW

Correct peak flow technique is important. Your health care provider should show you (or your child) how to use a peak flow meter, and should review the technique from time to time. In general, follow these steps:



- 1 Move the pointer to the lowest setting on the scale.**
- 2 Stand up.**
- 3 Take a very deep breath.** (Fill your lungs all the way.)
- 4 Hold your breath while placing the mouthpiece in your mouth,** between your teeth.
- 5 Close your lips around the mouthpiece.**
- 6 Blow out as hard and as fast as you can in a single blow (about 1 second or less).** Remember, the peak flow meter measures how quickly you can blow air out. Also, be sure to blow from deep in your lungs—not from your mouth.
- 7 If you make a mistake or cough, don't accept the reading.** Do the test over again.
- 8 Repeat steps 1-7 two more times.** The highest of your 3 scores is your peak flow.



Take peak flow readings for 2 weeks, when you're feeling well and your asthma is under control. Write the highest number you get each day—morning and evening—in the chart below. The highest score over the 2-week period is your **personal best**. This is the number that you should compare future peak flow readings against. This number may change over time. So from time to time, you might want to repeat this exercise for another 2-week period when you're feeling well.

Record of “personal bests” over a 2-week period

[illegible]

DETERMINING PEAK FLOW ZONES—YOUR ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

Fill in the chart below to determine the ranges of your peak flow zones. These ranges can be used along with asthma signs and symptoms to monitor your asthma. Also fill in these ranges on your Asthma Action Plan.

GREEN ZONE
(GO—MAINTAIN)
80-100% of
PERSONAL BEST

$\frac{\text{your personal best} \times 0.8}{\text{your personal best}}$

YELLOW ZONE
(CAUTION—STEP UP THERAPY)

50-80% of PERSONAL BEST

your personal best x 0.5 — **your personal best x 0.8**

RED ZONE
(STOP—GET
HELP NOW!)
< **50%** of
PERSONAL BEST

<

your personal best x 0.5

Keep a record

A record book may come with your peak flow meter. Use it faithfully to record your peak flows and help identify patterns of asthma symptoms—and how they relate to triggers and changes in asthma medicines. Take your record book with you to each visit to your health care provider.