



Family Education Sheet



Peak Flow Meters

What is a peak flow meter?

A peak flow meter is a tool to measure how fast air moves out of your lungs. When used correctly, a peak flow meter can tell you how well your lungs are working to push air out. The peak flow number and your symptoms are used as a guide to help you manage your asthma.

Why is it necessary?

By using a peak flow meter you can:

- see how well your medicines are working;
- figure out when to use more or less medicine;
- find out what makes your asthma symptoms worse; and
- often tell if an attack is coming before you notice symptoms.

When to use your peak flow meter

You should use your peak flow meter:

- every morning and every night before you use your medications;
- whenever asthma symptoms appear; or
- any time your doctor or nurse asks you to.

How to use your peak flow meter

1. Remove food or gum from your mouth.
2. Move the arrow to the bottom of the number scale (set it at 0).
3. Stand up.
4. Take a deep breath until your lungs are as full as possible.
5. Put your mouth on the mouthpiece of the peak flow meter. Close your lips around the mouthpiece. (Make sure that your tongue is not inside the hole.)
6. Blow out through the mouthpiece as hard and as fast as you can. Blowing makes the arrow move up the number scale.
7. Write down the number you get. If you cough or make a mistake, try steps 1 through 5 again.
8. Repeat steps 1 through 6 two more times.
9. Write down the highest of the 3 numbers in your peak flow diary.

Your "Personal Best" peak flow number

Your best peak flow number is the highest number you can get, repeated, over a 2 to 3 week period when your asthma is under good control. Good control is when you feel well. Sometimes you may have asthma symptoms even when your peak flow number is high. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, feeling tight in the chest, or waking up coughing at night. Your asthma doctor or nurse can help you find out what your best peak flow should be.

Once you have your personal best number you can use the zone system in your **Asthma Action Plan** to find out if your airways are getting smaller before there are any symptoms.

When to Call your (Asthma) Doctor or Nurse

Call if:

- you cough whenever you use your peak flow meter;
- you are having symptoms of asthma and your peak flow number is low; or
- you are having symptoms of asthma and your peak flow number is still high.