

Using a Peak Flow Meter



What is a peak flow?

A peak flow is a hand-held device that you blow into in order to measure how well air moves out of your lungs. This is measured by one quick, hard, outward breath.

Peak flow meters are one of many tools that can provide some information on how well your child's asthma is doing. It can provide insight on what might be happening on the inside of the lungs, but should be used alongside the signs and symptoms your child is showing.

Peak flow meters come in different shapes and colors, but all work the same.



Directions for using a peak flow meter:

Step 1 – Place the indicator at the base of the numbered scale

Step 2 - Stand up

Step 3 – Take a deep breath in

Step 4 – Place the meter in your mouth between your teeth and close your lips around the mouthpiece. Do not let your tongue block the hole in the mouthpiece

Step 5 – Blow as hard and as fast as able

Step 6 – Write down the number at the arrow. If you cough as you use the meter or make a mistake, don't use that number. Blow into the meter again and get a new reading

Step 7 – Move arrow back to zero and repeat Steps 1-6 two more times

Step 8 – Record the best of the three blows on a chart or asthma action plan. This is your personal best number

Peak Flow Zones:

Work with your child's primary care doctor to find their personal best peak flow number, which will be used to calculate their peak flow zones. There are three peak flow zones, which are set up like a traffic light: Go Zone, Caution Zone, and Danger Zone. A chart will be created to indicate your child's peak flow numbers in each zone. Your child's target zones can also be added to your Asthma Action Plan. This will help you know what to do when your child's peak flow number changes.



Go Zone

80-100% of best peak flow

Signals all clear. No asthma symptoms are present. Take your daily medicines as prescribed.



Caution Zone

50-80% of best peak flow

Signals caution. Follow your asthma action plan for instructions on taking your rescue medication, then check your peak flow again to see if it returns to the Go Zone. You may be having an asthma episode that requires an increase in your medicines, the addition of new medicines, or another change in order to get your overall asthma under control. Follow your Asthma Action Plan and seek additional medical care as indicated.



Danger Zone

below 50% of best peak flow

Signals a medical emergency. Take your rescue medication right away. Call your doctor immediately if your peak flow number does not return to the Caution or Go Zone and stay in that zone. If you cannot reach your doctor and your peak flow stays in the Danger Zone, go directly to the emergency room. Follow your Asthma Action Plan and seek additional medical care as indicated.