

Peak Flow Meters

Basic facts for
children and
families

What is a peak flow meter?

A peak flow meter measures how well you are breathing. It is something you blow into that lets you know how much air is moving in and out of your lungs.

- “Peak” means the most.
- “Flow” means amount you can breathe out.
- “Meter” means something that measures.

Why do I need it?

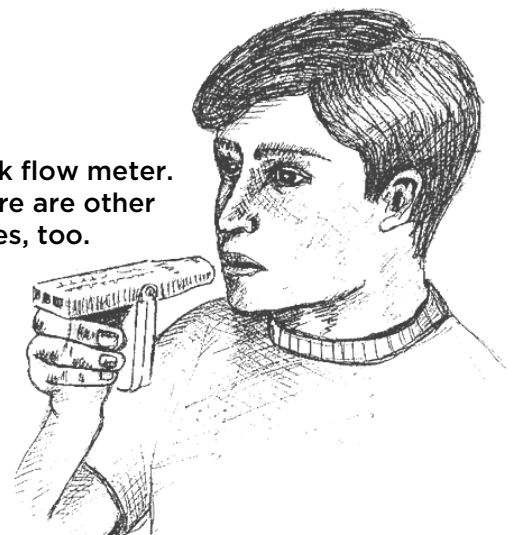
You may know the signs when your asthma is getting worse. But sometimes it's hard to know how bad your asthma really is. The peak flow meter gives you a number that lets you know how well you are breathing. You can tell your healthcare provider the number you got and how you are feeling. Your healthcare provider will know whether or not to change your medicine.

How do I use it?

It is easy!

1. Set the arrow at zero.
2. Stand up.
3. Take everything out of your mouth, such as gum.
4. Take a deep breath in.
5. Close your lips tight around the tube and blow one hard, quick breath into the mouthpiece. It's important to blow your hardest.

Peak flow meter.
There are other
types, too.



Check your peak flow numbers two times every day for at least two weeks. Here's how:

1. Blow into your peak flow meter like you've learned.
2. Look at the number by the arrow and write the number down on a piece of paper.
3. Blow two more times into the mouthpiece and write those numbers down.
4. Circle the highest of the three numbers. Write the highest number in the Peak Flow Calendar below. That's your first "number of the day."
5. Do this twice a day—every morning at the same time and every night at the same time—for at least two weeks. Checking your numbers for a month is even better.

Peak flow calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night	Night

How do I remember that?

Sometimes it's easier to remember a poem. Try this:

Set at zero and give a quick blow.
See the number?
Well, what do you know!
Do it twice more,
now which one is greater?
Write it all down and look at it later!

What happens after two weeks?

Figure out your green zone

1. Look at the calendar you kept. Write down your overall highest score. This becomes your personal best number. It stands for the most you can breathe out.
2. Now figure out 80 percent of that score. This is your green zone score. To figure out your green zone score, multiply the score by 0.8. If you're not sure how to do this, ask someone to help you.

Green Zone Score Example		Your Green Zone Score
Best blow score:	300	Your best score:
80% = 0.8	x .8	x .8
80% score:	240	Your 80% score:

3. So now you have your "80 percent score." Next, look again at all the scores for the two weeks. Any scores higher than the 80 percent score means you're in the green zone. Green means "all clear, you're doing well." This is your "GO" zone.

What about your yellow zone?

4. The yellow zone is where your peak flow scores are less than 80 percent (green zone) and more than 50 percent (red zone). Yellow means caution. Be sure that you have a yellow zone plan. Know what medicines to take.

You'll figure out your red zone scores next. Then you can figure out your yellow zone scores, too.

Figure out your red zone

5. Now divide your overall highest score by 2. That's your 50 percent score." Any scores lower than the 50 percent score mean that you're in the red zone. Red means "medical alert." STOP and call your healthcare provider right away.

Red Zone Score Example		Your Red Zone Score	
Highest score:	300	Your highest score:	
50% =	÷ 2		÷ 2
50% score:	150	Your 50% score:	

Figure out your yellow zone

6. Now that you have your green zone and red zone scores, you can figure out your yellow zone. The yellow zone peak flow scores are less than 80 percent (green zone) and more than 50 percent (red zone). They are the scores in the middle. Be sure that you have a yellow zone plan. Know what medicines to take.

Yellow Zone Score Example		Your Yellow Zone Score	
80% score:	240	Your 80% score:	
50% score:	150	Your 50% score:	
Yellow zone:	240-150	Your yellow zone:	

What do I do with my scores?

Take your scores to your healthcare provider. You can write down your scores here:

Green zone score:

Yellow zone score:

Red zone score:

Peak Flow Meters

Your health care provider will make an asthma management plan with you and your family. This way, you will know what to do if you are in the yellow or red zone. Your healthcare provider may want you to change how much medicine you take or the type of medicine you take.

To Learn More

- Your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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