

# HOW TO USE A Peak Flow Meter



Peak flow meters are devices used to measure how well air is moving through your lungs.

Here are some general steps for how to use a peak flow meter. Be sure to read the instructions that come with your peak flow meter. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care professional (such as nurse practitioner, physician assistant, nurse, respiratory therapist, or asthma educator) to show you how to use your peak flow meter. Review your technique at each follow-up visit. This page also tells you what the numbers on the meter mean and how they can help you and your doctor or other health care professional keep your asthma under control.

1. Always stand up. Remove any food or gum from your mouth.
2. Make sure the marker on the peak flow meter is at the bottom of the scale.
3. Breathe in slowly and deeply. Hold that breath.
4. Place mouthpiece on your tongue and close lips around it to form a tight seal (do not put tongue in the hole).
5. Blow out as hard and fast as possible.
6. Write down the number next to the marker. (If you cough or make a mistake, do not write down that number. Do it over again.)
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6 two more times.
8. Record the highest of these three numbers in a notebook, calendar, or asthma diary.

Compare the highest number with the peak flow numbers on your written asthma action plan. Check to see which zone the number falls under and follow the plan's instructions for that zone.



**GREEN ZONE: 80%-100% of personal best** → Take daily long-term control medication, if prescribed.



**YELLOW ZONE: 50%-79% of personal best** → Add quick-relief medication(s) as directed and continue daily long-term control medication, if prescribed. Continue to monitor.



**RED ZONE: Less than 50% of personal best** → Add quick-relief medication(s) as directed. Get medical help now.

*Continued on reverse* ▶

Recording peak flows at the same time daily will give you the most consistent numbers.

#### HOW TO FIND YOUR PERSONAL BEST OR USUAL PEAK FLOW:

- Follow the steps on page 1 to take your peak flow daily for 2 to 3 weeks when your asthma is under good control. Record the highest number each day.
- Take peak flow at the same time every day. Peak flows are lowest in the early morning and highest between noon and 5 p.m. Recording peak flows at the same time daily will give you the most consistent numbers.
- The highest number during this period of time will be your personal best number.

Your doctor or other health care professional may also want you to take your peak flow before and after using your quick-relief medicine. Follow his or her instructions.

Find a new personal best with each new peak flow meter (different meters can give different numbers).

Find a new personal best for children every 6 months to allow for growth changes.

