

Control your asthma before it controls you

HOW TO USE A PEAK-FLOW METER

Manage asthma with education

If you have asthma, you know that it can make your lungs feel like they are working harder than normal. That's because the airways into your lungs can narrow and form mucus, which makes it harder to breathe.

But you don't have to wait for a surprise ending. There are many ways to control your asthma...before it controls you. For starters, you can learn what triggers an attack. Is it pet hair? Is it allergies? Dust? You can also learn what tools are available to help you manage your condition, such as a peak-flow monitor.



BE WELL — Go with the flow. Use your peak-flow monitor every day to keep track of your asthma's highs and lows.




WHAT IS A PEAK FLOW METER?

The phrase "peak flow meter" may sound like a mouthful. But this is a quick and easy tool to measure how easy or hard it is for you to push air out of your lungs. Plus —

- **It's portable:** Only two pieces make up the tool, and it can fit easily in your hand.
- **It's predictable:** Even if you don't feel any symptoms coming on, the peak flow meter "predicts" if you will or not. So you'll know how early to take your medicine to avoid an attack.
- **It's personal:** You don't have to go to the doctor's office to do it. You can measure your air flow every day right from the comfort of your home.
- **It's affordable:** It doesn't cost a lot. In fact, your insurance will most likely cover it.

Reading the signs

Asthma can affect you differently from one day to the next. That's why you should track your breathing every day. Peak flow meters use a color-coded guide to make it extra easy.

-  **Green Zone:** Your lungs are working well, and your medicine is working. Go ahead and enjoy your daily activities.
-  **Yellow Zone:** Your lungs are working harder, and your medicine may need to be changed. Call your doctor, and use caution in your daily activities.
-  **Red Zone:** You are having breathing problems, and your asthma is not under control. Call for emergency assistance or go to your doctor. You need treatment right away.

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HOW TO USE A PEAK-FLOW METER

Ready to measure how well your breathing? It's easy with practice.

1. Connect the mouthpiece to the meter.
2. Move the marker to zero.
3. Stand up or sit up straight.
4. Now hold the meter with your thumb and the finger right next to it.
5. Take in a deep breath.
6. Close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
7. Blow into the mouthpiece once as hard and fast as you can.
8. Repeat #7 two more times.
9. Record the highest number of the three blows.
10. Clean the mouthpiece with soap and water.

Remember — always follow your doctor's advice. He or she can help you create an asthma action plan, including how and when to use a peak-flow meter.

YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

When it comes to asthma, there is no "one size fits all" answer. Your target zone should be healthy for you, and may vary from someone else because of your age, size or how strong your lungs are. Your doctor can help you figure out the action plan and zone for you.

Take action on your asthma. Resolution to make lifestyle changes, no matter how small, will make a big difference.

Source: Peak Flow Meter. Developed through a partnership of The Ohio State University Medical Center, Mount Carmel Health and OhioHealth, Columbus Ohio. Accessed July 20, 2009 at <http://www.healthinfotranslations.com/>.

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