

Peak Flow Meters

A peak flow meter is a device that measures the amount of air you can expel from your lungs. It is very helpful in determining the degree of severity of your asthma.

It can detect changes even if you are not currently having symptoms. This is very important because it allows you to practice early intervention. Also it may help you decide to cut down on medications when things are going well. Overall it will be very useful to determine if the current asthma program is effective for you.

It is important to use the device regularly so you know your baseline peak flow. Remember peak flows are dependent on individual effort and motivation. Accurate measurements can be obtained only if you exhale as forcefully as possible. A daily record should be kept on the peak flow chart.

Ideally peak flows should be measured at the same time twice a day (in the morning and in the evening).

Once your personal best has been determined (we will help to calculate yours) the zone system classification can be used to assist in managing your asthma.

Three zones are identified in this way:

- GREEN ZONE peak value between 80 to 100% of normal. Readings in this zone mean that everything is fine and that you need to continue with your medication plan.
- YELLOW ZONE peak value between 50 to 80% of normal. Indicates caution and signals the need for medication adjustment. (Proceed as indicated in management of the acute asthma attack.)
- RED ZONE peak value 0 to 50% of normal. Means a need for immediate medical attention.

Steps to accurate peak flow measurements:

1. Move the pointer on the meter to zero.
2. Stand up and hold the meter horizontally with your fingers away from the vent holes and the marker.
3. With your mouth open, slowly breathe in as much as you can.
4. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and place your lips around it.
5. Blow out as hard and fast as you can. Give a hard sharp blast, not a slow blow. The meter measures the fastest puff, not the longest.
6. Repeat three times, waiting at least ten seconds between puffs, move the pointer to zero after each puff.
7. Record the highest out of the three readings.