
What is a peak flow meter?

A peak flow meter measures how well air moves out of your child's lungs. It checks your child's breathing like a thermometer checks their temperature.

During an asthma attack (also called an episode), the airways in the lungs narrow. This makes it harder for air to move out of the lungs, so the peak flow number will be lower as the airways become narrow.

One of the first signs that an asthma attack is coming is a decrease in peak flow score below the "personal best" (explained below). The peak flow score (also called a peak flow number) may drop before you notice other signs of an asthma attack, such as wheezing or shortness of breath. **Starting treatment early at home is the best way to keep an attack from getting worse.**

How do use a peak flow meter?

1. Place the sliding marker on the numbered scale at 0. (Some peak flow meter brands require shaking the meter, like you would a thermometer, to get the marker to 0.)
2. Have your child stand up.
3. Have your child take a very deep breath until they cannot breathe in any deeper.
4. Put the meter in your child's mouth. Make sure your child seals their lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
5. Have them blow out through only their mouth as hard and as fast as they can.
 - Be sure your child is trying their best when blowing on the peak flow meter.
 - A weak effort on the meter will result in a lower peak flow score than usual.
 - However, if your child coughs forcefully (very hard) into the peak flow meter, the peak flow score will be unusually high.
6. Find the number where the sliding marker stopped. This is your child's peak flow score.
7. Repeat steps 1 thru 6 two times. Write down the highest score your child got in those 3 tries. You will know the number is accurate if the 3 tries are close together in numbers.
8. Clean the peak flow meter 1 time each week. Wipe the mouthpiece with warm water, and let it dry.

What is a normal peak flow score?

A normal peak flow score is different for each person. The doctor can tell you your child's expected peak flow score (also called the predicted score), but because your child has asthma, they may not be able to get their predicted score.

It is preferred to find out your child's "personal best" score. This is the highest score your child gets on the peak flow meter over a 2-week period when their asthma is under good control. Use the calendar on page 3 to write down the peak flow score for 2 weeks so that you can find your child's personal best score.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Peak flow meter, continued

How do I find my child's personal best score?

- When your child is feeling good and their breathing is normal, measure the peak flow 2 times each day for 2 weeks.
- Write down the numbers on the calendar.
- At the end of 2 weeks, find the biggest number. That is your child's personal best score.
- If your child has an asthma attack during those 2 weeks, do not use those scores to find the personal best. Wait until the attack is over, and then start again.

NOTE:

- Find the new personal best score at least 1 time each year. This number may change as your child grows.
- It is also important to determine your child's personal best score each time you get a new peak flow meter, even if it is the same brand.
 - There is some change between all peak flow meters, just like your weight may be slightly different depending on which scale you use.
 - Therefore, your child should use the same peak flow meter all the time.

How often does my child use the peak flow meter?

When you know your child's personal best, most doctors advise that children use the peak flow meter 1 time each day. By using it every day, you will be better able to notice an asthma attack early and start medicines early. It may be helpful to write down the score on a calendar each day.

What are the peak flow zones?

Your child's doctor will set up peak flow zones based on either the predicted or personal best score. The doctor should also tell you what medicines to give and what actions to take in each zone. The zones will help you and your child manage their asthma based on peak flow scores each day.

The zones are set up like a traffic light:

Green zone: GO! Asthma is under good control. Peak flow score is 80% to 100% of predicted or personal best score.

Yellow zone: CAUTION! Asthma attack is coming. Peak flow score is 50% to 80% of predicted or personal best score. Refer to your Asthma Action Plan (AAP). If you do not have one, call your child's doctor.

Red zone: STOP! Get help. Your child is having an asthma attack. Peak flow score is below 50% of predicted or personal best score. Refer to your Asthma Action Plan (AAP), and call your child's doctor.

Reminder: Always take your child's peak flow meter and calendar (if you write down the score each day) to doctor's visits so the doctor can see how well your child is doing.



This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.
































































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Peak flow meter, continued

Peak flow score calendar

Month _____

- Write the day of the month in the small block.
- Write your morning peak flow score in the top half of the box where you see the sun. 
- Write your evening peak flow score in the bottom half of the box where you see the moon. 

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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